

INDIA AND GREECE

CONNECTIONS AND PARALLELS



INDIA

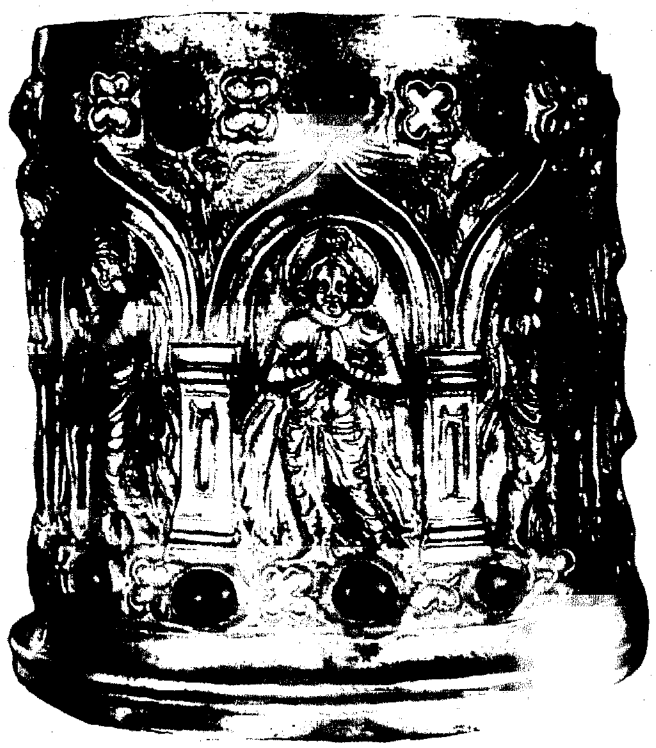
ND GREECE
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Editor: Dr. Saryu Doshi

MARG PUBLICATIONS

CONTENTS



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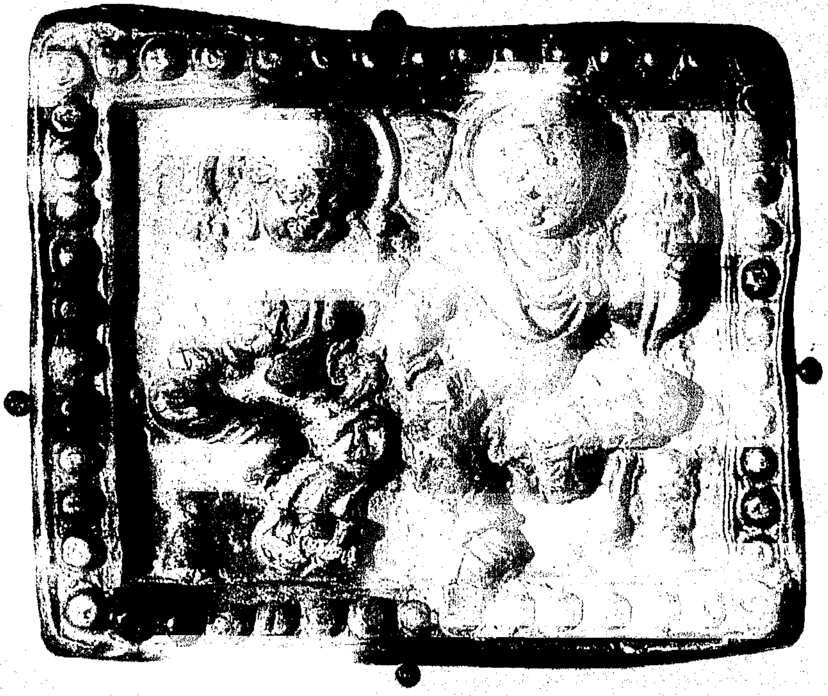
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FOREWORD

Twenty years in the Greek Foreign Service, out of which I have spent twelve in the fascinating Far East, have taught me to believe in the value of comparisons. To study different cultures with an open mind leads to deeper understanding, respect and a serene spirit of tolerance.

When trying to draw parallels between the world of myths in lands as far from each other as Greece and Japan, I concurred with Michael Grant's conclusion that myths "are dialects of a single language." In attempting an overview of comparative literature I realised the immense depth of affinities in ideas, thoughts and expressions. By looking closely into the vast religious landscape of the Far East, where some of the greatest religious systems of the world come into contact and intermingle harmoniously in most cases to produce the unique phenomenon of syncretism, I have been imbued by the inner bliss of a spirit of tolerance and this, far from any negative "superiority" connotations, is in tune rather with the wonderful term "Samavayo," coined by Emperor Ashoka in his Rock Edict No. XII which signifies beautifully a "coming together," "combination," "concourse."

My return to India, ten years after my first assignment here, represents another form of comparison: an evaluation of India's progress and development.

It was only natural then that I felt overwhelmed by joy when I was asked to say a few words about Dr. Saryu Doshi's undertaking to dedicate a whole issue of Marg to the encounter of two of the world's oldest civilisations, India and Greece. Alexander's campaign was not the only meeting point of these two cultures. More than two centuries of historic contact made the history of the Indo-Greeks, in the words of A. K. Narain, "part of the History of India."

Arnold Toynbee's lucid remarks on the reflection of Hellenic aesthetic styles in the statutory of northern India, and on the north-eastward expansion of Hellenic Art, "in the service of Mahayana, to Eastern Asia, while south-eastwards it became one of the stimuli of Indian art of the Gupta Age," may be considered an inspiration to the present edition.

I am sure that this volume will provide ample incentive for further comparative studies connected with these two great civilisations.

—George A. Sioris

The Royal Road

Saryu Doshi

More than two thousand years ago Alexander the Great led his conquering armies across the Asiatic lands through formidable mountain ranges and perilous passes to the borders of India. He celebrated his triumph by founding the city of Kandahar. This city, originally named Alexandria, was the first of many Alexander established in the region to mark his victorious advance through the land. All the cities Alexander created were named Alexandria, after him, and were generally distinguished from one another by their location. Alexander campaigned tirelessly, undeterred by the bitter cold of the winters or the lashing rains of the monsoons. Eager to subdue the Magadhan empire and to reach the shores of the great ocean which he believed extended from the base of the Himalayas and surrounded "all the known nations of the earth in its majestic embrace," he pressed forward. As he marched eastwards through the land of the 'Five Rivers' his exhausted soldiers were confronted with the churning waters of yet another river in spate. Suddenly and unanimously they refused to go any further. Alexander's appeals and threats were of no avail and, dejectedly, he bowed to the collective will. He turned homewards without attaining the objective for which he had struggled through great difficulty and danger. Destiny denied him his last glory—a victorious hero's welcome at home—as death overtook him before he could reach Macedonia.

The spectacular saga of Alexander's daring exploits, his unfulfilled ambitions and premature death, have the grandeur and pathos of epic poetry. This episode in the history of Indo-Greek relations has eclipsed all other events that occurred before or after it. For, connections, albeit tenuous, existed between India and Greece a century and more prior to Alexander's arrival in India in 326 B.C. and continued to do so for hundreds of years afterwards, despite the vast stretches of land and sea that separate them. The resulting exchanges, perhaps, led to the many affinities between the two cultures which are apparent in several spheres of human endeavour such as language, literature, philosophy and the arts.

The connections and parallels between India and Greece, as well as the nature and extent of certain reciprocal influences, formed the subject of a seminar organised under the joint auspices of the Governments of India and Greece in Delphi in June 1984. The participants at the colloquium attempted to delineate the areas where interchange occurred as well as to explore the lesser-known aspects of Indo-Greek relations. The ensuing discussions served as a catalyst for more detailed analysis of the subject; it was clearly evident that not all the similarities stemmed from a process of mutual influence—some could be recognised as encapsulated memories and traced to common origins in the distant past, while others could be viewed as analogous stages of development that mark the cultural evolution of each country. There were, however, various manifestations in both cultures which undeniably represented creative interaction at different levels of syncretism.

In this publication, Marg features contributions which examine the direct and indirect influences that flowed between India and Greece. The Hellenic civilisation was not confined to Greece—it had been carried with Alexander's conquests to northern Africa and Western Asia. In the centuries preceding and following the Christian Era, Hellenistic influences were transmitted to India through Rome, Egypt, Syria, Parthia and Bactria. The Greek element—sometimes in its pristine form and sometimes in its synthesised form—was always ubiquitous in the cultural currents emanating from these regions. The study of the relations between the two civilisations becomes meaningful because each exercised an immense influence on its surrounding regions. The culture of Greece spread to the Mediterranean world; that of India radiated to countries in south and east Asia. Both Greece and India were greatly instrumental in shaping the content of philosophic and religious thought as well as the expression in the arts, in their respective spheres of influence.

The Achaemenid Era

The first contact between India and Greece must have occurred during the sixth century B.C. when Cyrus the Great of Persia (558-535 B.C.) enlarged his kingdom to include the Greek cities of Asia Minor in the west and Afghanistan and the borderland of India in the east. His successor, Darius, extended the conquests even further eastwards by annexing eastern Punjab and Sindh in 518 B.C. The Achaemenid empire thus stretched from the Mediterranean Sea to the land bordering the River Indus. Linking the distant cities of the empire were trade routes known as the 'royal high roads' which were indispensable for the movement of

troops as well as trade. Much stress was laid on their proper maintenance. The Persian empire served as a common meeting ground for the Indians and Greeks who, as subjects of the great Persian Emperor, came in touch with one another through trade and commerce as well as the administrative and military services. This contact subsequently extended to interaction on the native soil of the two countries.

Among the first Greeks to arrive in India were the soldiers serving as mercenaries in Darius' army during its expedition in India. A large number of them, fatigued from prolonged fighting or disabled in bloody and brutal battles, chose to settle down in India rather than undertake the long and arduous journey home. These foreigners formed small settlements in which they followed their own customs and spoke their own language. In all likelihood, the inhabitants of such enclaves also included political figures who were sent into exile to this remote corner of the vast realm. During his expedition in India Alexander came across one such colony at Nyasa in the Swat valley whose inhabitants claimed to have descended from Dionysius, the "divine Greek conqueror of India." They welcomed Alexander as a fellow Greek and led him to the mountain sacred to the god of wine, where Alexander and his men made wreaths of ivy and vine and indulged in many days of drinking and festivities. From all accounts, Nyasa enjoyed the status of a free and independent republic with an administration modelled on Greek prototypes. That there were other such settlements in the northwest provinces of India and that Greeks were familiar figures to the Indians is attested by the grammarian Panini, in the fifth century B.C., who refers to them as *Yavanas* in his treatise. The word *Yavana* is derived from the Persian word *Yauna,* meaning Ionian.

Just as the Greek soldiers came to India in the army of the Persian kings, Indian troops marched with the contingents that invaded Europe under the Persian ruler, Xerxes, in 480 B.C. But the fact that there is no further reference to the Indian battalion that fought against the Greek allies at Thermophylae indicates that this contact did not extend beyond the battlefield.

Along the road that soldiers marched, from one end of the Persian empire to the other, also journeyed traders and travellers, explorers and adventurers. Some of them had visited India or heard about it from others and their tales found their way into Greek records. These accounts vary considerably, ranging from the authentic to the fantastic and the fanciful. Among the legends associated with India was the one describing the giant ants that watched over the gold dust that the Indians carried off to pay as tribute to the Great King of Persia. According to Herodotus, the fifth century Greek writer, "this gold dust was guarded by gigantic ants but the Indians mounted on swift she-camels plundered the gold at mid-day when the ants were asleep in their holes, and made off hotly pursued! These ants were smaller than dogs but larger than foxes and threw up the gold in excavating their burrows." Perhaps there may be an element of truth in this story as gold dust was occasionally washed down with the waters of rivers. It would therefore be within reason that ant-hills on the alluvial plains of India contained some of it. Another Greek author, Ktesias, compiled an account towards the end of the fifth century B.C. which contains grotesque descriptions of Indians as "men who slept in the shelter of their own enormous ears."

This period—from the sixth to the fourth centuries B.C.—represented, in both India and Greece, an age of intellectual activity when thinkers speculated anew on the world around them and the goals of human existence. In India, traditional beliefs and rituals associated with the Vedic religion were being questioned and new doctrines based on ethical values were being evolved by the Jains and the Buddhists. Almost at the same time, in Greece, philosophers attempted to go beyond the limitations of the existing system by initiating enquiries into the nature of the physical world and thereby establishing the foundations not only of Western philosophy but also of Western sciences. Interestingly, in both countries, savants and learned men were addressing themselves to almost identical problems and arriving at solutions that were strikingly similar.

There are, for instance, close correspondences in the manner in which Indian and Greek theorists envisaged the physical structure of the universe as also the doctrines of reincarnation and transmigration of the soul. These ideas could have, of course, evolved identically but independently in each culture. But this appears unlikely because the affinities are too numerous and remarkable to explain away as mere coincidences. The fact that these concepts were crystallised in India in the preceding century would seem to reveal a profound impact of Indian religious and philosophical systems on Greek thought.

Exactly how and when these influences from India flowed to Greece is not known. The accuracy with which the philosophical doctrines were transmitted suggests a direct contact between the thinkers of the two countries rather than

knowledge acquired through intermediaries. The clarity with which Greek philosophers propounded their views presupposes a familiarity with a subject that can only arise when all doubts and dissensions have been resolved through discussion. Pythagoras, Plato and Democritus, it was said, had traversed the long distance to the land of the Brahmans to confer with Indian sages. This belief was current among the disciples of Classical philosophers in Alexandria as late as the second century A.D. Another widely held belief maintained that, during the fourth century B.C., a group of Indian sages met Socrates in Athens. There is, however, little evidence of Greek influence on Indian philosophy.

The Greeks also borrowed many elements from Indian medicine; the Ayurvedic concept of *tridhatu* occurs in Plato's writings. The importance of proper breathing was emphasised by Hippocrates in the same way as is done in the Ayurvedic system. Hippocrates described and employed Indian medicaments in the treatment of diseases.

Alexander and the Mauryans

Alexander descended on the flat plains of the Punjab in 326 B.C. He had come to assert his domination on the provinces which had formed part of the Achaemenid empire. His victorious progress came to an abrupt end when his soldiers mutinied and his dream of developing the Indus region as a centre of Hellenistic culture departed with him.

The brief expedition of Alexander led to some interesting consequences in the context of Indo-Greek relations. One of these was the establishment of the Sceptic school of thought by Pyrrho, one of the Greek philosophers who had accompanied Alexander on his campaign. Pyrrho's teachings were highly influenced by his visit to India and reflect, in their essentials as well as in their details, the ideas and doctrines expounded by the naked Jain saints of Taxila.

On Indian soil, Alexander's campaign resulted in numerous Greek settlements and the cities he founded served as urban centres amidst Indian villages. These cities, with their planned layout of streets and buildings, were modelled on Greek prototypes. The administration too was based on Greek examples and the Greeks, with their imported customs and beliefs, represented the ruling elite. Until such time as they became totally indigenised and absorbed in the local cultural patterns, these cities served as the nuclei of Greek influence in India.

Perhaps, the most significant effect of Alexander's campaign was the example it provided to Indian rulers. For the first time they could see in the person of this great conqueror the embodiment of the ancient Vedic concept of the *Chakravartin*—the Universal Emperor—which, until then, seemed to have belonged to the fabled world of mythology. The most immediate and significant effect of Alexander's military strategy was the profound impression it made on Chandragupta Maurya. Inspired by Alexander's example, he took advantage of the dissensions that arose following Alexander's death in 323 B.C. and led the revolt against the Greek governors. After consolidating his position in the Punjab, he marched against the Magadhan kingdom, defeating the Nanda monarch. Then, with the aid of his wily ally, Chanakya, he established himself on the throne of Pataliputra and ruled over a realm that extended from the Ganges river to the Hindu Kush mountains.

In little more than a decade, Chandragupta Maurya had established himself firmly in his dominions. He also built up a formidable military force which enabled him to confidently confront the Greek king, Seleucus Nicator, when he came, sometime *c.* 303 B.C., to claim the Indian conquests of Alexander. Chandragupta's powerful position is underscored by the terms of the treaty which appear to be more in favour of the Indian than the Greek king. The agreement was sealed by the marriage of a Seleucid princess to a member of the Mauryan royal family. The treaty also provided for the exchange of ambassadors between the two kingdoms, and thus Megasthenes arrived at the court of Chandragupta Maurya at Pataliputra. In due course of time, other envoys also took their place at the Mauryan court. Antiochus I sent Deimachus to serve at the court of Bindusara at Pataliputra; he was joined by Dionysius from the rival Hellenistic monarch, Ptolemy Philadelphus of Egypt. All these men documented their observations of India and their chronicles proved to be the primary source of information on the subject.

The accord between the Seleucid and the Mauryan houses had a beneficial effect on trade between the two kingdoms. The Royal Road that Chandragupta Maurya built, linking the frontier to the capital, facilitated the rapid transport of goods. The concept of the Royal Road appears to have derived from that of the Persian kings whom Chandragupta Maurya seems to have emulated in many aspects. The Mauryans freely borrowed the architecture of the Persian palace complex and adopted the kingly rituals of the Persian court. The artisans, craftsmen and technicians that streamed into India from Greece in the wake of Alexander's invasion were commissioned to build monumental palaces of stone which, by their

1 Adoring attendant from a Buddhist shrine
5th century A.D., Hadda, Afghanistan
Stucco, h. 54.6 cm
Collection: The Cleveland Museum of Art, Purchased from the J. H. Wade Fund
Courtesy, The Cleveland Museum of Art

2 Frieze showing four scenes from the life of Buddha: Birth, Enlightenment, First Preaching, Nirvana (detail)
2nd-3rd century A.D., Gandhara
Stone, h. 67 cm
Courtesy of the Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C., Acc. No. 49.9









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3 **Fasting Buddha**
c. 4th century A.D., Sikri
Stone, h. 83.82 cm
Present whereabouts unknown; Photo, Horst Schastok

size and impressiveness, reflected the strength of the empire. The pillars that Ashoka erected at various points in his empire were also of stone and their accomplished handling betokens the hand of a foreign craftsman.

Since Achaemenid art borrowed a few elements from Greece, Mauryan art is, to a limited extent, indebted to Greece. More direct parallels to Greek and Hellenistic art are evident in the motif of the horse on the abacus of the Sarnath pillar capital and many of the ornamental motifs such as the honeysuckle and the acanthus leaf. Even so, the general aura of Mauryan art is Achaemenid—the Persian antecedents being more dominant than the Greek.

Perhaps more Greek in inspiration are the terracotta figurines found at Pataliputra and its environs. The Hellenistic influence reveals itself in the superb handling of the female figurines—the depiction of their drapery and physique—and recalls those of Tanagra. The double-mould technique employed in making the heads of these figures again points towards Greek diffusion.

During the reign of Ashoka, the grandson of Chandragupta, there were a large number of Greeks residing in India. In two of his rock edicts, he refers to Greeks—once as his subjects. An Ashokan inscription on the mountainside near Kandahar was written in Greek and Aramaic, presumably so that travellers and people of foreign origin could grasp its import. Ashoka also sent Buddhist missions to preach the *dharma* in the lands of Ptolemy Philadelphus of Egypt, Antigonus Gonatus of Macedonia, Alexander of Epirus and Magas of Cyrene. He appears to have maintained friendly relations with the different rulers of the Hellenistic world and this inevitably strengthened the cultural connections between the two civilisations.

The Indo-Greek Kings

The last of the Mauryan kings ruling at Pataliputra was dethroned and slain in 184 B.C. The Mauryan empire disintegrated, leaving the frontier regions vulnerable to attack. The Bactrian Greeks on the northern side of the Hindu Kush mounted assaults on the Indian provinces and annexed the Kabul valley, as well as Gandhara. The rule of the Bactrian Greek kings, known as the Indo-Greeks in India, was marked by internecine warfare between two rival houses.

During their supremacy the Indo-Greeks exercised control over all provinces west of the Khyber Pass, Gandhara and the hill regions as far as Humza, Punjab and Multan. They penetrated eastwards as far as Pataliputra and, in the south, conquered Saurashtra and Gujarat. Of all the Indo-Greek rulers, Menander (mid-second century B.C.) was the most celebrated. He extended generous patronage to Buddhism but whether or not he was actually converted is a subject of controversy. The respected writer, Plutarch, mentions that upon Menander's death, various cities contended for the possession of his ashes.

While Menander appears to have supported Buddhist philosophy, Heliodoros, son of Dion, claimed to be a *Bhagavata* and, *c.* 100 B.C., erected a stone memorial pillar in honour of Vasudeva (Vishnu).

One of the outstanding monuments of this period is the Greek city of Sirkap. In contrast to Indian cities with their haphazard plans, Sirkap was laid out symmetrically in a pattern characteristic of other contemporary Hellenistic centres.

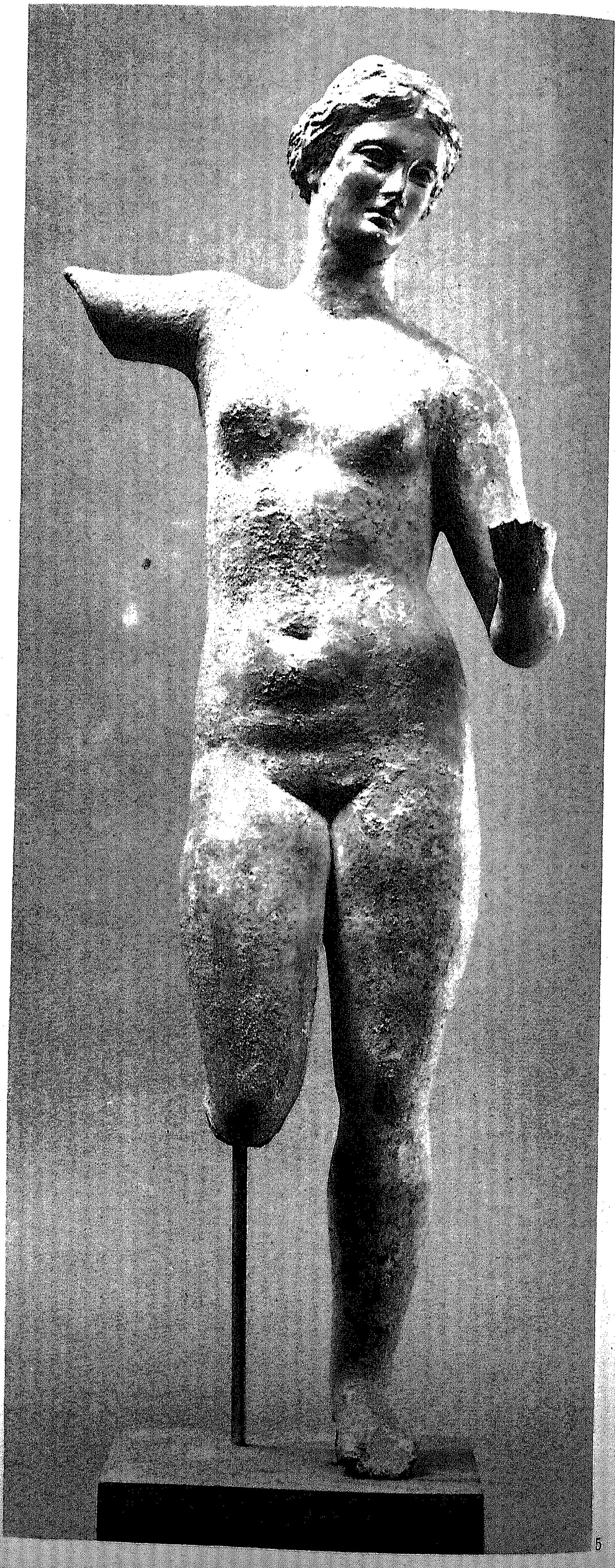
During these centuries, the Indians learnt much from the Greeks in the sphere of scientific enquiry which included metallurgy, astronomy and astrology. The Indians also adopted the Greek calendar as well as the concept of a week comprising seven days which were named after the sun, moon and different planets. In the area of arts and crafts too, the Greeks contributed significantly. It was they who introduced skillfully executed coins bearing the name and portrait of the ruling king. Representations of Greek gods and other mythological figures appeared on the reverse of these coins. Other objects manufactured from schist and other soft stones also portrayed scenes from Greek mythology.

The Shakas and the Parthians

The Shakas, nomadic tribals from the interior of Asia, driven out of their own lands, moved southwest and settled in Drangiana which came to be called Seistan, after them. There they came under the suzerainty of the Parthian kings. In India they first established themselves in the region of Sindh and quickly adapted themselves to their new environs, accepting the Indian religions as well as names. The process of assimilation of the Shakas into Indian society was accelerated by matrimonial alliances with the local people.

From their base in Sindh, they proceeded south-east to acquire the areas of Kutch and Saurashtra and from there marched along the Narbada river to Ujjain. They also extended their dominions towards the north-east into Punjab. The leader of these Shakas, known as Maues, reigned *c.* 20 B.C. to 22 A.D. With his occupation of


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4 Fertility Goddess
1st century A.D., Gandhara, reportedly from Charsada
Terracotta, h. 26.67 cm
Collection: The Cleveland Museum of Art, John Severance Fund
Courtesy, the Cleveland Museum of Art

5 Aphrodite
4th-3rd century B.C., Classical, Greece
Terracotta, h. 43.49 cm
Collection: The Cleveland Museum of Art, Gift of John Huntington Art and Polytechnic Trust
Courtesy, The Cleveland Museum of Art

6 Bacchanalian relief with intoxicated courtesan and Vasantasena
Late 2nd century A.D., Mathura, Maholi
Red sandstone, h. 104 cm
Collection: National Museum, New Delhi
Courtesy, The Cleveland Museum of Art

Gandhara, Maues succeeded in driving a wedge between the remnants of the two rival Indo-Greek kingdoms in that region. Under his successor, Aze I, the territories of Gandhara and eastern Punjab were incorporated into his kingdom.

By the beginning of the Christian Era, the Shakas had subdued all the Indo-Greek rulers south of the Hindu Kush mountains. They occupied Greek territories and readily assumed Greek manners and methods of administration. They copied Greek coins, adopted the Seleucid calendar and continued the existing traditions in the arts and crafts. They accepted the architectural forms of the Greeks as well as their town-planning schemes. Conspicuous in this respect is the Shaka temple at Jandial with its Greek plan, Ionic pillars and Classical mouldings. Over a period of time the Greek influence became considerably diluted. The Shakas unfortunately possessed little artistic ability of their own and consequently their work tended to be imitative, repetitive and crude in its execution.

The last of the Shaka rulers was succeeded by a Parthian named Gondophares in A.D. 19. He expanded his territories by annexing part of the Parthian dominions to the west of Seistan.

Gondophares has been famous in the Western world because of his connection with the Biblical St. Thomas. The story, mentioned in the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles, states that after the death of Lord Jesus, it became the responsibility of St. Thomas to go and preach the gospel to the Indians. St. Thomas was reluctant to proceed on his mission. And so the Lord appeared to him in person and, claiming him as his servant, sold him to a certain merchant called Habban, who had been commissioned to obtain a capable builder from Syria for king Gondophares. Arriving in India, St. Thomas received orders from Gondophares to build a palace



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but instead invested the money entrusted to him in charitable acts. When the king demanded an explanation from him for not carrying out his orders, St. Thomas replied that he had built him a palace in heaven. The king was furious and cast St. Thomas and the merchant Habban into prison. While the two were languishing in chains, Gad, Gondophares' brother, died. On being transported to heaven he saw the palace that St. Thomas had built by his good works. Gad was restored to life and he described his experience to Gondophares. Thereafter, both the king and his brother were converted to Christianity.

Soon after Gondophares' death the Parthian authority in India began to weaken and the resultant decline, combined with a devastating epidemic, paved the way for the Kushana conquest.

A large number of antiquities of this period have been uncovered from the Parthian city of Taxila. They are in the form of personal jewellery, household implements and arms. Hellenistic in style, some reveal intricate foreign workmanship. The re-establishment of the trade routes through Parthia contributed greatly towards facilitating the import of Graeco-Roman articles, and the movement of skilled craftsmen.

Until this period, sea voyages from the Mediterranean to India tended to be long and tedious as the sailors kept close to the coast. These navigational practices were revolutionised by the discovery of Hippalus around the middle of the first century A.D. He noted that the monsoon winds blew regularly across the Indian Ocean. These, he rightly expected, would carry ships straight across the waters. His discovery made it possible to bypass the extortions of the Arab middlemen, to establish direct links between India and the cosmopolitan Egyptian city of Alexandria and to accomplish a return voyage in one third the time. This provided a great incentive to trade which reached its peak in the first century A.D. Alexandria was the main port of departure, shipping luxury objects made in various parts of the Roman Empire. During the reign of the Roman Emperor Augustus, Roman culture—itself derived from that of Greece—reached India and exercised a subtle influence on it.

The Kushanas

Nomadic hordes of the Yueh-Chi left the Chinese province of Kansu in the second century B.C., moving westwards in the direction of Transoxiana. They settled in Ferghana but before long were again displaced by other migratory clans. The Yueh-Chi came to Bactria and in turn dislodged the Shakas.

Soon after the beginning of the Christian Era, one of the Yueh-Chi groups became powerful and its leader, Kadphises I, founded the Kushana dynasty. During the reign of Kanishka, the Kushana dominions extended from Bactria to Gandhara and the Punjab, from where the Parthians had been driven away. Its kingdom also encompassed Sindh, Mathura and Benares. These distant regions, with widely differing ethnic affiliations and religious beliefs, were unified under the leadership of Kanishka and his successors. Through this empire passed the great trade routes between the East and the West. The political stability provided a propitious atmosphere for flourishing and lucrative trade. Diplomatic relations between India and Rome helped to create the ambiance for intellectual and religious activities. The artistic impulses expressed themselves in two distinct schools of sculpture—that of Mathura and Gandhara—situated at two extreme ends of the empire.

The Gandhara School of sculpture effloresced in the north-western regions of the Indian subcontinent with Taxila and Peshawar as its chief centres. The proximity of the trade routes made these cities receptive to diverse stimuli. Cultural currents from the Hellenistic world, Iran and China intermingled with the indigenous elements to produce a syncretic style which shaped figures in stone and stucco.

The artistic traditions of the region drew upon the Hellenistic heritage of Bactria and the philhellenic character of Parthian art to forge a suitable idiom. In its later articulations, it relied more heavily on the Graeco-Roman models. Even here, the Parthian mentality intervenes; it hardens the soft voluminous folds of the drapery seen in Roman examples into schematic ridges in Gandhara art. Classical antecedents are again encountered in motifs such as acanthus leaves and Corinthean capitals.

The kingdom of the Kushanas, with its cultural and artistic traditions, was devastated by the hordes of white Huns that descended on the north-west provinces of India around the middle of the fifth century A.D. Their revolting cruelties and vandalism left a trail of dead bodies and ruined monasteries. With the destruction of the Kushana empire, the Graeco-Roman element in Indian civilisation gradually lost its outward identity as it merged and dissolved into the variegated patterns of Indian culture.

THE SUBLIME AND THE INFINITE

Lokesh Chandra

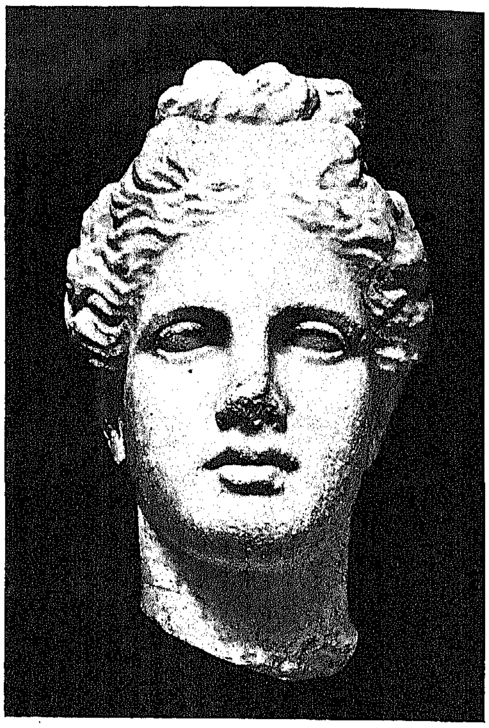
The blue embrace of the seas and skies of Hellas gave birth to a civilisation which matured in brilliant flashes of science during the Renaissance.



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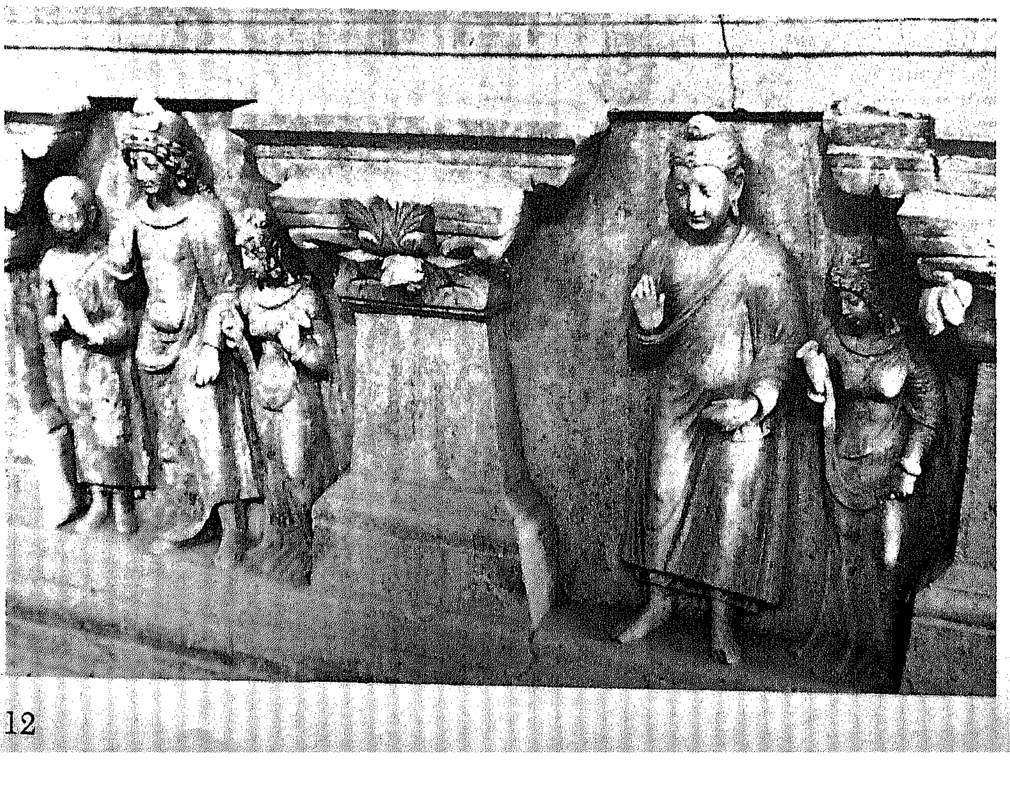
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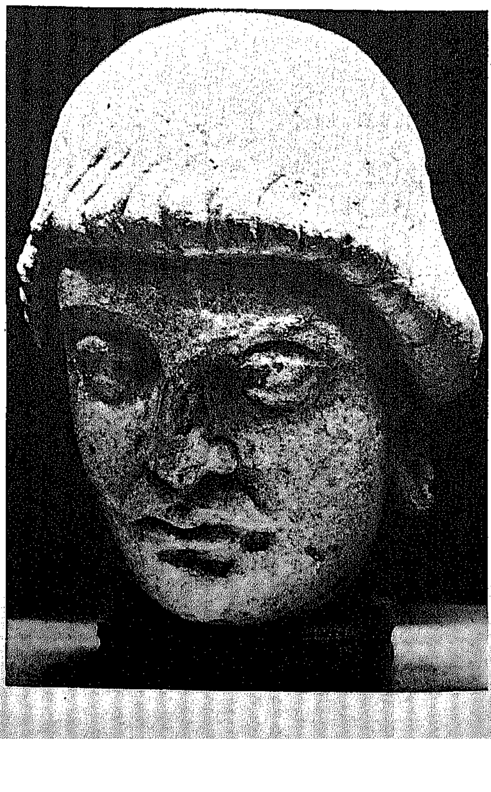
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1 **Standing female figure**
1st century B.C.—1st century A.D., Begram
Ivory
Present whereabouts unknown; Photo, Horst Schastok

2 **Head of Bodhisattva**
6th-7th century A.D., Gandhara
Grey slate, h. 13.5 cm
Collection: Gutman
Courtesy, Staatliches Museum fur Volkerkunde, Munich

3 **Head of Aphrodite**
4th century B.C., probably Cyprus
Marble
Collection: Cyprus Museum
Courtesy, *Les Merveilles des Musees Grecs*

4 **Bearded head**
2nd-3rd century A.D., Gandhara
Schist, h. 8 cm approx.
Collection & Courtesy, Oriental Museum, University of Durham

5 **Sculptural relief**
3rd-4th century A.D., Gandhara
Present whereabouts unknown;
Photo, Horst Schastok

6 **Head of foreigner**
From Rokri
h. 20.96 cm
Present whereabouts unknown;
Photo, Horst Schastok

The long pilgrimage of a civilisation thus renewed its immaculate commitment to progress. From its Hellenic roots surges the blood of today in pulsating vitality and limitless growth. The spirit of the West, the modern spirit, is a Greek discovery. To rejoice in life and to play games—athletic contests of every description—was a mark of the Greek psyche. The Greeks had the genius to sum up the knowledge of their times both in logic and aesthetics: on the one hand in a cathedral of thought and definitions, and on the other, in a temple of imagery and poetry. On the soil of Hellas stand ruins grooved by the nails of forgotten gods. They are syllogisms in stone; symbolic of that which took place in the secret gardens of human ideas and emotions.

Grousset calls India *"L'Inde, cette Grèce excessive."* In Greece everything tends towards harmony; mathematics and geometry concentrate on the finite and the measurable. With India, *cette Grèce excessive,* it is different; everything is immense, sublime and infinite. Counterparts to the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are to be found in the form of poetic continents, with tens of thousands of verses. In Greece, the world is always brought back to the measure of man. In India, man strives to adapt himself to a phantasmagoria of universes beyond the horizons of the mind.

The cultural similarities between Indians and Greeks in Homer reflect the common heritage of two peoples. Though Homer had heard of India, he confused it with eastern Ethiopia. The similarities between the names of their gods in many of their myths bear witness to a period when the Indian and Hellenic peoples had not yet separated. Homer mentions several items which come from India, particularly tin and ivory. The Greek names for these articles are similar to the Indian ones.

To trace the fragrance of the cultural heritage of India and Greece, the affinity of their roots, the sharing of the fragments of commonality, we have to go back to the Byzantine period and come down through the Dark Ages, to the revival of learning in the fifteenth century. The forces liberated by the Renaissance assumed a specific form of human self-esteem, and hereby arose humanism derived from Greek and Roman literature, the *litterae humaniores*—letters leaning to the side of man rather than that of divinity. The Greek revival in the eighteenth century aroused a desire to reappropriate abandoned provinces of mundane energy, and a hope to emulate antiquity in works of living loveliness and vigour. For a generation nursed in scholasticism and stereotyped theological formulae, it was the fountain of renascent youth, beauty and freedom, the shape in which the Helen of art and poetry appeared to the ravishing eyes of medieval Faustus. The men who followed knew that they were restoring humanity to its birthright after the expatriation of many centuries. The rise of the Romantic movement coincided with the discovery of the kinship of Sanskrit, Greek and Latin. In the words of Sir William Jones: "The Sanskrit language, whatever be its antiquity, is a wonderful structure; more perfect than the Greek, more copious than the Latin, and more exquisitely refined than either, yet bearing to both of them a stronger affinity, both in the roots of verbs and in the forms of grammar, than could possibly have been produced by accident."

Language Affinity

The inflections of Greek with the categories of number, case, person, tense and aspect, mood, voice, have their closest equivalents in Sanskrit. Indo-Iranian and Greek inflections, together with an extensive cognate vocabulary, justified a reconstruction of the Indo-European lexicon. Sanskrit *dadhami* is Greek *tithemi*; Sanskrit *abharam* is Greek *epheron.* The Greek *patrasi* (Latin *pater*) corresponds to the Sanskrit *pitrsu,* even in terms of the accent. Nouns and adjectives of Greek *dusmenes* (ill-affected) correspond to the Sanskrit *durmanah* (dispirited) and exist only in these two languages. The suffix—*ti* was almost as prolific in Greek as in Sanskrit: Greek *dosis* is Sanskrit *datih,* Greek *statis* is Sanskrit *sthitih.*

The generic affinity between Sanskrit and Greek voices ancient minds at their noblest, the magnificence of the depths of the Indo-European soul, transparent and intoxicating in its purity and maturity. The discovery of a brilliant heritage gave a new form, sound, grace and rapture to an emerging modern world. In 1816 appeared the momentous work of Franz Bopp who

compared the conjugation system of Sanskrit, Greek and other languages: *"Uber das System der Sanskritsprache in Vergleichung mit jenem der griechischen, lateinischen, persischen und germanischen Sprache."* (Regarding the structure of the Sanskrit language compared with those of the Greek, Latin, Persian and Germanic languages.) Thirty-six years later, in 1852, *Worterbuch* appeared in Sanskrit. It interpreted the entire linguistic inheritance of Sanskrit, and established the concept of development in human speech. This was followed in 1859 by the monumental work of Charles Darwin (1809-1882) who soundly established the theory of organic evolution in his *Origin of the Species.* Comparative philology of Sanskrit, Greek and other languages thus gave birth to a scientific *welt-anschauung* of organic evolution wherein slow first steps led to a critical threshold that opened new channels in human thought.

The brisk intercourse between India and Greece is attested by the fact that a special rule was inserted in the great grammar of Panini to distinguish three feminine forms of *yavana*: a Greek woman was *yavani,* the curtain was *yavanika* and the Greek script was *yavanani.* A few common Greek words for pen, ink and book found their way into Sanskrit. Greek *melan*: Sanskrit *mela*; Greek *kalamos*: Sanskrit *kalama*; Greek *puksinon*: Sanskrit *pustaka.* The Greek word *surunga,* Sanskrit *surunga,* for mine, and Greek *kampon,* Sanskrit *kampana,* for camp, shows the impact of the Greeks on the Indian practice of besieging fenced cities. The common Sanskrit word for centre, *kendra,* is from Greek *kentron.* Greek *drachma* is known till our day in Hindi as *damri.*

Myth

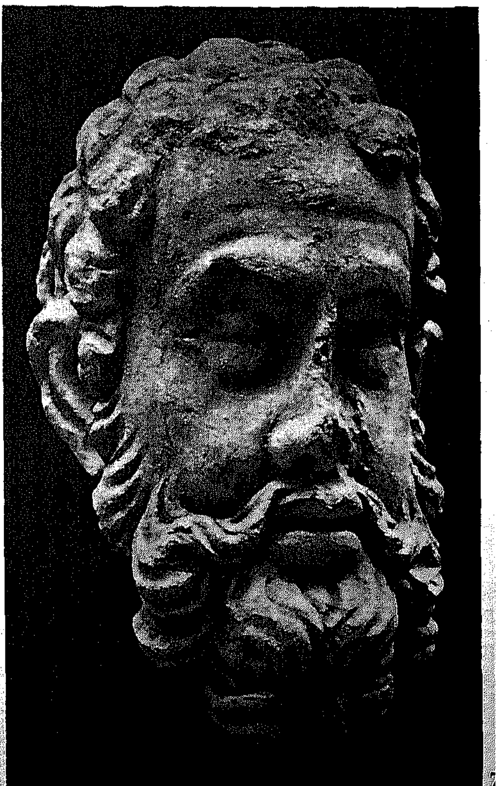
A breath of the imperishable strength of youth permeates the Greek genius, which is at its most vibrant and beautiful form in myth. Until the discovery of Sanskrit, however, Greek mythology was a compendium of metaphors and dreams, pages torn from the album of Cleo. With the rise of Comparative Philology and Comparative Mythology it became possible to sift and interpret the several strands of the magnificent fabric of Greek myths. The analogies between Sanskrit and Greek mythology became apparent. The omnipresent Greek god, Zeus, was Vedic Dyaus (sky). The concept of Earth as mother and of Heaven as father (Sanskrit *Dyaus pitar,* Greek *Zeus pater,* Latin *Jupiter*) was common to Vedic and Greek mythology. The name of Usas (Dawn) is derived from the root *vas* (to shine) and is cognate to Greek Eos. The Greek Helios is allied to the Vedic Surya; and Trita, who is impelled by Indra to slay the demon in the *Rigveda,* phonetically corresponds to Greek *tritos.* The Greek *pheguai* are identified with the ancient tribe of the *Bhurgus* as fire-priests. The *Bhurgus, Angirasas* and *Atharvans* are referred to in the *Rigveda.* The *Angirasas* were higher beings—intermediates between gods and men and attendants of Agni, who is often described as a messenger between heaven and earth. They possibly personify flames of fire as messengers to heaven. This view is borne out by the etymological connection of Sanskrit *angiras* with the Greek *angelos* (messenger). They are the *angels* of English.

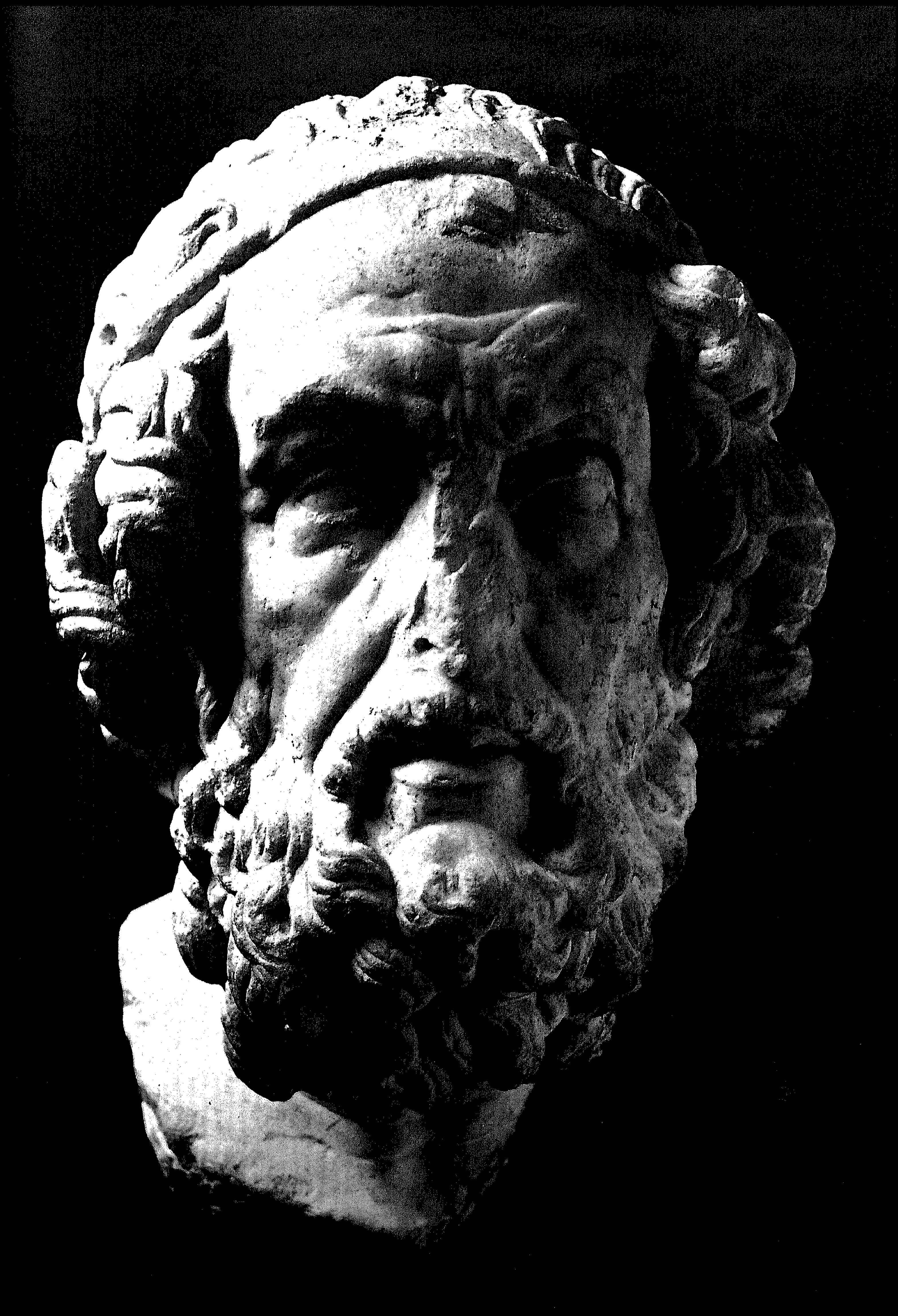
Dionysius, one of the most important deities of Olympus, was the son of Zeus and Princess Semele. He is said to have travelled as far as India, with a triumphal procession, in which maenads danced to the sound of his flute. This myth of Greek origin indicates Dionysius' link with our country. The maenads dancing to the tune of Dionysius recall the *gopis,* intoxicated with mystic passion on hearing the flute of Krishna.

A vast corpus of legend has accumulated around the person of Krishna, crystallising many forgotten personalities into his picturesque figure. A study of the Krishna cycle betrays nuances of the Graeco-Bactrian world which played a unique role in the radiation of Hellenistic elements to the Indian mainland. For example, the Pali version of the Krishna legend states that Vasudeva and his brothers assumed the sovereignty of Asitanjana—the metropolitan city of Bactria. Krishna is famous for his *hallisaka* dance. Although the etymology of this dance-form is unknown, it may be cognate to Hellas (Greece), and may be traced back to Hellenistic models. *Hallisaka* (with the dental sibilant) also recalls to us the ancient city of Eleusis, famous

7 **Bearded head (I.M. 171-1929)**
Hellenistic in style, Taxila, Punjab
Terracotta, h. 14.5 cm
Collection: Victoria and Albert Museum, London
Courtesy, Hallade M., *Gandharan Art of North India and the Graeco-Buddhist Tradition in India, Persia, and Central Asia*

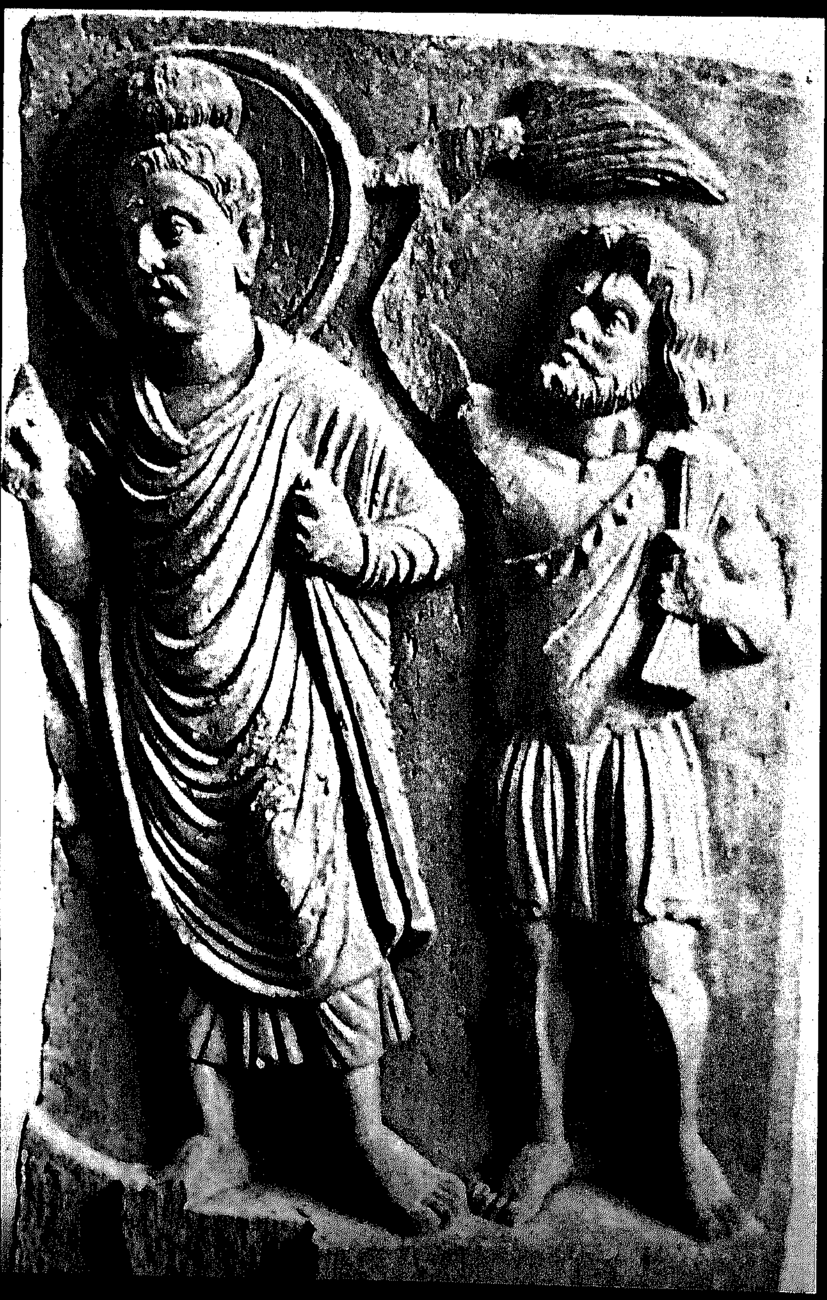
8 **Head of Homer**
Late Hellenistic or Graeco-Roman
Marble, h. 41 cm
H. L. Pierce Fund
Collection & Courtesy, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston





9 Buddha with Vajrapani
2nd century A.D., Gandhara
Schist, h. 39 cm
Collection & Courtesy, Museum fur Indische Kunst, W. Berlin

10 Mara's attack
3rd century A.D., Gandhara region
Schist, h. 52.6 cm
Collection & Courtesy, Museum fur Indische Kunst, Staatliche Museen, Preußischer, Kulturbesitz, W. Berlin



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11 **Kanishka's coin with Gandharan effigy of Buddha**
Late 1st century *c.* A.D. 78-100
Collection & Courtesy, Cabinet des Medailles, Paris

as the site of the Eleusinian mysteries, with its Kallichoron as well as "beautiful dances" mentioned in the Homeric hymn to Demeter. To the west of Eleusis lay the Rharian plain where Demeter sowed the first seeds of corn. The similarities between Greek and Indian legends are underlined by the fact that Krishna as the *gopala* also represents agrarian traditions. *Hallisaka* can be traced either to the Eleusinian mysteries or to the cult of the Thracian nature-god, Dionysius (alias Bacchus) "which gave a dominant role to women, and it provided a vent for the irrational passions of the subconscious depths of the psyche." A Bacchanalian group has actually been discovered in Mathura wherein the drapery of the *yakshis* is Greek.

Krishna says in the *Bhagavad Gita* 9.19: *sad-asac-caham* (I am both good and evil). Similarly, the Orpheic tenets hold that man is "a creature of mixed origin, containing a divine principle (Dionysius) and an evil one (the Titans)." Orpheus was torn to pieces by women possessed by Dionysian frenzy. So was Krishna cursed to death by Gandhari. The association of Krishna with the *Yavanas* is apparent in his killing of the powerful *asura*, Kala Yavana. The depth and extent of Indian contacts with the Hellenistic world need investigation; for, apart from mythological connections, links can be established also in architecture. An amphitheatre with pronounced Graeco-Roman characteristics has been excavated at Nagarjunakonda in Andhra Pradesh and an apsidal temple has been exhumed at Sonkh near Mathura on the site of a modern *naga*-temple. Perhaps *naga* stands for a foreigner, a Greek.

Religion and Art

The conquests of Alexander shifted the centre of Hellenic power eastward and left a vacuum for the emergence of a new power, the Republic of Rome. Greece lost her supremacy in the West without gaining complete political or intellectual domination in the East. The loss of Hellenistic hegemony in the West was counterbalanced by the splendid cultural achievements of the Greeks of Asia. There was a fusion of religion and art within the borders of the Hellenistic kingdoms, which included the north-western peripheries of India. In the art of Gandhara, Zeus became the inseparable companion of the Buddha by assuming the form of Vajrapani. He wears the characteristic dress of a Graeco-Parthian attendant, namely a short *chiton*, "caught in round the waist and provided with a scalloped turn-over edge at the top." In

this form, he figures in several Gandhara sculptures:
(1) Grass-cutter *svastika* presenting a bundle of grass to the *Bodhisattva,* on his way to the *bodhi* tree, accompanied by Vajrapani. (Marshall 1960:46 fig. 61, 57 fig. 76)
(2) Lord Buddha being fanned with a fly-whisk by Vajrapani. (Marshall 1960:47 fig. 63)
(3) Lord Buddha accompanied by Vajrapani, visits a Brahman ascetic in his hut. (Marshall 1960:48 fig. 66)
(4) Lord Buddha accepting the submission of the Naga Apalala. Behind the Buddha is Vajrapani clad in monk's robes, and with a third eye on his forehead. (Marshall 1960:52 fig. 69)
(5) Lord Buddha, attended by Vajrapani is listening to the prophecy of the Naga king, Kalika, and his queen. (Marshall 1960:57 fig. 75) In this sculpture of the period of adolescence of Gandhara art, Vajrapani has assumed a youthful appearance, a type that was to become familiar later on.
(6) The *Bodhisattva* as a starving and emaciated ascetic, seated in *padmasana.* On the left he is flanked by Indra and Brahma. On the left side is Sujata with food and at her back is Vajrapani. Sujata is dressed in a Greek *chiton* reaching the feet and a *himation.* (Marshall 1960:61 fig. 84)
(7) Courtesan Amrapali presents the mango grove to the Buddha. Vajrapani is towards the back on the left. (Marshall 1960:69 fig. 88)
The representation of Zeus as Vajrapani in Gandhara reliefs can be multiplied. From the role of an acolyte, Vajrapani was destined to play a leading role in later Buddhism, especially in the development of *vajravana.* The synthesis of Indian and Greek forms occurred in the Gandhara statues of the Buddha as well. The statues were drawn to classic proportions, following Hellenic models for physiognomy, gestures and drapery. A relief depicting the *Descent of the Buddha from the Trayastrisma Heaven* has stylistic parallels to the *Arch of Galerius* in Thessalonica.

The Persian Achaemenid empire interconnected Classical Greece and India. As a result we encounter evidence of Greeks who served in the Indian province of the Achaemenid dominions and Indians in the army of Xerxes when he invaded Greece. Greeks came into contact with Buddhism during the reign of Emperor Ashoka in the third century B.C. Eusebios, in the fourth century A.D., reports that an Indian discussed philosophy with Socrates in Athens.

Philosophy

The doctrine of metempsychosis seems to be derived from India and developed by Greek intellectuals such as Orpheus, Pherekydes, Pythagoras and Empedocles. The casual link between a person's current social status and his good or evil deeds in a previous existence is found only in Hind and Hellas. "According to Diogenes Laertios, Pythagoras (sixth century B.C.) was the first person in Greece to teach metaphysics as a metaphysical idea." By the fourth century B.C., Plato could refer to the doctrine of metempsychosis as "ancient tradition." The practice of abstention from meat-eating was imported from India. Like the Indians, Plato claimed that both animals and human beings possess a soul.

The Greek sceptic philosopher Pyrrhon, who is said to have accompanied Alexander to India, found Indian ascetic practices instructive. Reminiscences of the physical endurance of the Indian ascetics circulated widely in the Hellenistic world. The legend of Alexander and the Brahmans testifies a favourable Greek disposition towards Indian ascetics and their wisdom. "India served as an object upon which educated Greeks projected their own demoralisation, namely their loss of confidence in contemporary Greek culture and institutions. Thus India became an idealised country, abundantly fruitful, while Indian philosophers came to possess a wisdom superior to that of the Greeks."

To Maues, who reigned from *c.* 80 B.C. to *c.* 58 B.C., is assigned the first representation of a Buddha statue on his coin. (Tarn 1951:400) His coins were minted at Pushkalavati, the capital of Gandhara, which he

conquered around 70 B.C. A copperplate inscription from Taxila speaks of 'the Great King, the Great Moga.' Moga is the Indianised form of Maues. Does the city of Moga in Punjab enshrine his name?

Cultural Contacts

Alexander's invasion of India intensified the contacts between the two countries. The memory of the historic horse of Alexander lives on in Punjab; local peasants still venerate a Buddhist stupa near Rawalpindi as the tomb where Alexander founded a city named Bucephala in his charger's honour. Nearchos (*c.* 312 B.C., as quoted by Strabo, born *c.* 50 B.C.) refers to the use of writing material in India made from well-beaten cotton cloth. It is the earliest reference to rag-paper in India. Megasthenes, the Greek ambassador at the court of the Mauryan Emperor Chandragupta, wrote an extensive account of the life and customs of India. The town of Sirkap near Taxila had a typical Greek layout. Ai Khanoum was a genuine Greek city. Menander, the Greek king of Bactria, appears in the Buddhist scripture *Milinda Panha* (Questions of Milinda), as a devout Buddhist.

Numerous coins inscribed in Greek are found all over northwest India, while Greek inscriptions have been discovered in Bactria and are discussed by Louis Robert in his paper "De Delphes a l'Oxus."

The ethnical term *yavana*, or *yona* in middle India, occurs for the first time in the rock inscriptions of Ashoka II, V, XIII. The *yonas* evidently comprise the peoples of the five kings: Antiochos, Ptolemaios, Antigonos, Magas, and Alexander (Modern Syria, Egypt, Macedonia, Cyrene, Epirus or Corinth, respectively). Inscriptions of Ashoka written in Greek and Aramaic have been discovered at Kandahar. They are the eastern-most Greek inscriptions ever found.

The Besnagar inscriptions, datable to the first century B.C., were dedicated by Heliodoros, the son of Dion, who was the ambassador of Antialkidas to Kasiputa Bhagabhadra. A number of inscriptions from the *chaitya*-hall of Karla (first century B.C.) contain the ethanicon *yavana*. These *yavana* motifs decorated pillars, cisterns and dining halls of the Buddhist community. The *yavanar* are mentioned in early Tamil literature. The oldest testimony is in *Puram* 50: 16-21, which describes the *Yavanas* as importers of wine. *Puram* 343.1.10 explains the import of western gold.

The *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea* of the first century A.D. describes the ports and specific products imported from India into the Classical world. It speaks of Proklais from Pukkhalavati (Pushkalavati) as a great trade exporium of Gandhara and as famous for its steel. The Pahlavi *polavaten* and New Persian *pulad* for steel is an adjectival noun from Middle Indic *pokkalavata*, a derivative of the town *Pokkhalavati* (modern Charsadda). Like the Silk Route, a Steel Route must have linked India and Greece via Iranian lands. The gypsies probably have trod this Steel Route as itinerant ironsmiths in continuation of age-long traditions.

In a list of articles for which there was a ready market at Barygaza, the *Periplus* 49 says that the king would buy "good-looking virgins for concubines" and the constructions are of a "standing order in that market." Kalidasa represents the king as accompanied by *yavana* women. Piseidonius says that Eudoxus shipped flute-girls for his attempted voyage to India round the Cape in the end of the second century B.C. "In the third century Ptolemy II was importing Indian girls into Egypt along with Indian dogs and cattle." (Callixenus in Athens 5.201a) The name of an Indian courtesan of sensual beauty at Alexandria is preserved as: *Jalantas-candra-capala* (shimmering as the reflection of the moon upon the waters). So I leave you in this rapture, in liquid silence, and let the hymn sleep.

How the ancient Indians and Greeks made their discoveries and how they brought a new world to birth out of the dark confusions of an old world that had crumbled away, is full of meaning for us today who seek a New Order. A white-hot spiritual energy was at work. The modern man seeks those deep influences that have worked with power through the centuries, touching with light of reason and grace of beauty the entire being of the ever-evolving world.

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Coin of Alexander the Great (336-323 B.C.): reverse
Courtesy, Shri Shukla; Photo, Sharad Madan

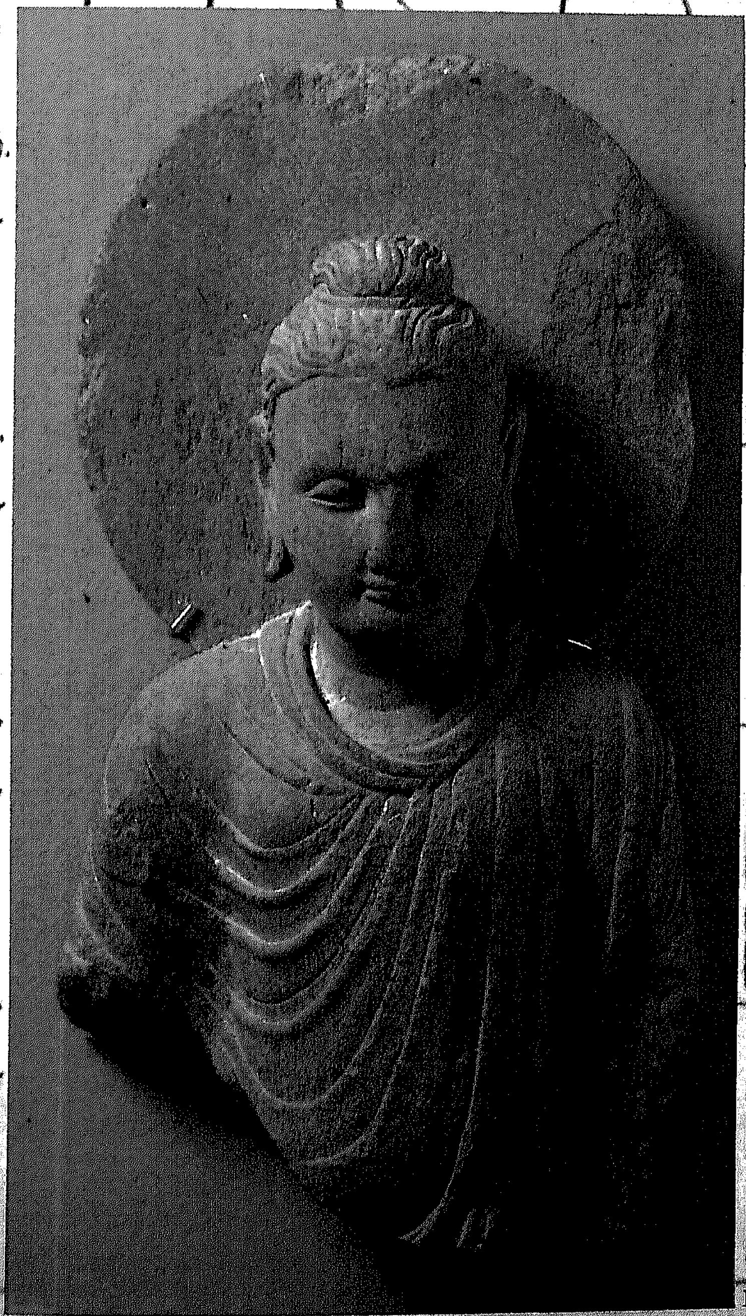
PHILOSOPHY

PHILOSOPHY

THE ONE AND THE MANY

D. P. Chattopadhyaya

Over the last four millennia, the territorial identities now known as India and Greece have undergone significant changes.



1



2

1 **The Buddha**
2nd-3rd century A.D., Gandhara
Schist, h. 28 cm
Collection & Courtesy, Oriental Museum, University of Durham

2 **A Bodhisattva**
2nd-3rd century A.D., Gandhara
Schist, h. 14 cm
Collection & Courtesy, Oriental Museum, University of Durham

During the historical period they have maintained contact with one another on various cultural levels; yet although they have creatively interacted, their development has essentially been along parallel lines. Greek influences reached many countries, near and far, around the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, while the Indian civilisation expanded into the regions surrounding it. The colonisers of both countries disseminated their respective political idealogies, as well as their philosophies and customs; for, a growing culture rarely remains confined within its original territorial boundaries.

It is popularly believed that cross-cultural influences stem from military exploits and conquests. While this is generally true, in the case of India and Greece the cultural contributions of traders and travellers who carried with them elements of their native land should not be disregarded. The common assumption that Indo-Greek cultural contact is a direct outcome of Alexander's expedition to India (from 327 to 324 B.C.) is untenable. The accounts left behind by Greek travellers, the archaeological evidences and the philological researches to date suggest that, long before the military arrival of the Macedonian king in the Indus Valley, the cultural and trade contacts between India and Greece had already been clearly established. Herodotus (464-425 B.C.) claims to have visited India. Though this claim cannot be substantiated fully by established facts, the account of his travels through the Orient contains considerable information regarding the people of India, their customs and forms of government. He elaborately refers to the methods of gathering and mining gold in India and also to the fierce independent character of her people which made it impossible even for the mighty Persian king, Darius, to subjugate them.

Historical and other sources indicate that even in the early centuries of the Christian Era, Indians had cultural and trade contacts with the Greeks, the Egyptians, the Romans, the Scythians, the Bactrians, the Parthians and the whole of the Middle East along with South-East Asian countries such as Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia and the Phillipines. Trade migration and counter-migration of these peoples brought the various countries close to each other. Racial and cultural synthesis followed the military expeditions and civil migration.

The news of the development and vast resources of the Indus valley civilisation had reached the Hellenic world well before the advent of Alexander. His expedition to India is nevertheless the high-water mark of the Indo-Greek connection and it is not to be taken as a sporadic and purely military event. The direct impact of his campaign on the future course of Indian history proved temporary. But the outcome of the Macedonian occupation of the north-western boundaries of India turned out to be of lasting value. It was the beginning of an era in which Hellenism was instrumental in conditioning the culture and the political institutions in regions on the western boundaries of India. After Alexander's conquest, much closer contact was established between the Hellenic civilisation and India which, at the time, included Afghanistan and a part of Central Asia.

The small Indian oligarchies and republics were not equal to the large, cohesive and well-trained army of the Macedonian king. The political and military strength of Alexander's campaign made the leaders of the Indian states aware of the need to form a larger political aggregate. Smaller states merged into the larger ones; this was the beginning of the formation of a still greater imperial aggregate founded later on by Chandragupta Maurya. Chandragupta, aided by the northern Indian states, successfully intervened in the Punjab and drove away the Macedonian garrisons. In the process, Indian communities belonging to different stratas of society, Brahmanic and non-Brahmanic, worked in unison towards the same goals. A wider range of perception strengthened Chandragupta's political strategies; he successfully repulsed the attacks of Seleucos and conquered the whole of Afghanistan as well as the eastern part of Iran.

It is said of Chandragupta that he married a daughter of Seleucos and received with honour his ambassador, Megasthenes, who left for posterity one of the most trustworthy accounts of ancient India and of Indo-Greek relations. Megasthenes' successor, Daimachus, continued to maintain

diplomatic relations between the House of Seleucos and that of the Mauryas. It is known that Antiochus, son and successor of Seleucos, and Bindusara, son of Chandragupta, were in the habit of exchanging friendly letters affirming their intents to maintain peaceful relations. Evidence is also available to suggest that Ptolemy Philadelphus, the Greek ruler of Egypt, sent an ambassador to the court of the Mauryas.

By the third century B.C. Buddhism had struck deep roots in and around India. Ashoka, the most famous of the Mauryas, did his best to preach and propagate the Buddha's message of peace and love far and wide. He sent embassies to Antiochus Theos, the king of Syria, and the adjacent areas of West Asia, Antigonis Gonatas of Macedonia, Magas of Cyrene, and Alexander of Epirus. This resulted in closer Indo-Greek ties during the period between 250 B.C. and A.D. 150.

In the middle of the third century B.C., Bactria and Parthia, two provinces of the Greek empire, revolted against the rule of the Seleucid emperors stationed in distant Syria. This established the beginning of the disintegration of the Greek empire on its eastern front and led to a state of turmoil and disturbance in the western-border provinces of India. The Scythians attacked and drove away the Bactrian Greeks from their homeland and the latter took shelter in the Indian dominions in Afghanistan and western Punjab (120 B.C.) where they remained for the next two hundred years. Culturally, this period of Indo-Greek relations perhaps had a more lasting effect than that of Alexander's campaign.

Menander (King Milinda of Buddhist literature) and Apollodotus are among the noted Greek rulers who made deep inroads into Indian territories. Though administratively cut off from the main Hellenic world, the Greeks who remained in India introduced elements of the Greek ethos while assimilating cultural aspects of India. Unlike the nomadic hordes, excellent in war, who often defeated and dislodged the Indians and the Greeks from their own territories, the latter proved the superiority and strength of their settled cultures by assimilating the former in their ways of life. In retrospect it is interesting to reflect on the reasons which enabled the vanquished in war to absorb the victor's culture during times of peace.

In the historic past, long before the Greeks arrived on the scene, a number of immigrant peoples from different parts of the Euro-Asian World came to India, intermixed with the local population and permanently settled down there. In the centuries that followed several ethnic and racial groups spread themselves all over Asia Minor, Mesopotamia and Sumer before settling in the Indo-Gangetic valley. By the fourth millennium B.C., they had developed a remarkable civilisation in the "Fertile Crescent" from Lebanon and Syria to the Persian Gulf. Some of them came to India in successive waves before the Vedic Aryans, and introduced navigation, agriculture, as well as stone architecture to the people of the Indo-Gangetic valley. Their language was Dravidian. They used a pictographic script similar to the one in prehistoric Mesopotamia. In all probability they were the authors of the civilisation of Mohenjodaro and Harappa.

Vastness, variety, intercourse and unity mark the history of Indian culture. Despite its isolative geographical features, India's physical boundaries instead of relatively alienating its culture from the influences of others, acted as a strong, cohesive and unifying force. The immigrants of different origins, having reached the mountainous and sea-bound fertile lands of India, gradually realised that they had to live there together with the local populace and that they were not, in fact, completely alien—ethnically or linguistically—to the locality. Their varied contributions have enriched the complex structure without disturbing its unity. Every culture, like every language, has in it two levels of structure: superficial and deep. In terms of the number and kind of surface institutions, India had been a land of endless diversity. But a deeper analysis of its sustaining forces unmistakably reveals its underlying unity. In a similar context Arnold Toynbee observes: "The combination of cultural unity with political disunity, which we find in the Hellenic world at the dawn of its history, appears to be widespread. . . The same pattern is also unmistak-

able in the histories of the Syriac, Sinic, Indic, and Sumero-Akkadian Civilisations."

After the civilisation of the Indus Valley, the next significant phase in the history of Indian culture is represented by that of the Vedic Aryans. The earliest recognised source of information is said to be the Sanskrit text *Rigveda-Samhita.* Philologists have found that the language of the work is affine in forms of grammar and roots of verbs to Persian, Greek, Latin, Teutonic, Celtic and Slavonic, strongly suggesting their common origin. The names of the Vedic gods – like those of the Persians, the Hittites and the Greeks – symbolise such elements and powers of nature as sky (*dyaus*), earth (*prithvi*) the sky-god proper (*Varuna*), the god of thunderstorm (*Indra*), the sun-god (*Surya/Mitra*), the god of storm (*Rudra/Shiva*), the gods of morning and evening (*Ashvins*), the wind-gods (*Maruts/Vayu/Vata*), the rain-god (*Parjanya*), the fire-god (*Agni*), the god of drink (*Soma*), water-nymphs (*apsaras*) and the aerial elves/sprites (*ribhas/gandharvas*). The Rigvedic gods also had enemies who are called *asuras* and *rakshasas* (demons/evil spirits). The multiplicity of gods of the ritualistic religion has been philosophically questioned later on and the ultimate unity of the universe is asserted by the creation of one god known variously as: *Agni* (fire), *Matarishvan* (air), *Aditi* (earth), *Vishvakarma* (Great Being or Creator of the Universe), *Prajapati* (sun), *Hiranya-garbha* (literally, the bearer of golden potentiality) and *Yama* (order).

From the viewpoint of philosophy and the history of science in India, one particular concept of the *Rigveda* especially deserves our attention: the concept of *rita* (the all-pervading principle of orderliness). Unless one intuitively believes that there is order – or order of orders – in Nature and Reality, it is difficult to justify the scientific undertaking of discovering its law-like structures. To quote Whitehead: "... there can be no living science unless there is widespread instinctive conviction in the existence of the order of things, and in particular, of an 'Order of Nature'... This remark is important in respect to the history of scientific thought."

Even before Plato it is said of Heraclitus (sixth century B.C.) that he too believed in the idea of Nature's orderliness. Like the *rita* of the Aryans the Heraclitean idea of order or law had clear natural as well as divine connotations, sustaining all human laws. Without conceptions such as *rita, logos* or *nous,* the relation between one and many or that between the intelligible and the sensible is hardly explainable.

What is that ultimate **One** which is individuated into **many** in the world of sense? To this unavoidable and fundamental question, the cosmologists in Greece and India addressed themselves in right earnest. Interestingly, most of the pre-Socratic Greek philosophers flourished in Ionia or the north-eastern part of Mediterranean Asia – an area where, time and again, East and West met. Thales of Miletus, a contemporary of Solon, thought that the ultimate **One** is water from which everything is made and of which everything consists. Interpreters do not unanimously agree upon the exact meaning of Anaximander's *apeiron* (boundless). At times it has been suggested that this primary substance is without origin and indestructable, and its motion is also eternal. According to Theophrastus' interpretation, it undergoes periodic alternation and creation as well as destruction. Anaximenes, also a Milesian, maintained that the ultimate stuff of the universe is air endowed with eternal motion, a hangover of Anaximander's view, and that its individuation is due to changes in the eternal motion, rarefaction and condensation.

While some Greek cosmologists were primarily interested in finding out the ultimate material stuff of the world and in explaining its motion, certain other philosophers' main interest lay in discovering the forms relating to and holding together the objects of different sorts of cognition.

Greek atomists, Leucippus and Democritas, like their Indian counterparts, the *Vasheshikas,* were convinced of the impossibility of an absolute creation or destruction, but they found no viable reason for denying the multiplicity of being, real objects, their motion, formation and transformation. Without admitting non-being, motion and multiplicity could not

be explained. This realisation led the atomists to postulate unobservable, indivisible and innumerable small particles, the ultimate constituents of all that we can sense and know.

According to the *Vasheshika* system, all the non-eternal objects we come across are caused by eternal and invisible atomic constituents. Atoms are of two types—simple (dimensionless mathematical points) and complex (having minimum dimension). The dimensionless points have potential qualities corresponding to the four primary senses: vision, taste, smell and touch. Space (*akasha*) is inert and is the formless substratum of sound. Atoms exist in combined form. Only atmospheric air consists of uncombined, simple atoms. Whereas space is the substratum of wave-like sound, air is its medium. In the *Samkhya* philosophy space has been reckoned as a fifth kind of element. For perhaps it seemed proper to the philosophers of numbers *(samkhya)* that the elements correspond to the five sense-organs. The physics of the *Samkhya* has been further developed by distinguishing two sets of elements: subtle *(tanmatra)* and gross *(mahabhuta)*. The elements in *Samkhya* are not atomic or eternal, but are evolved out of primeval matter *(prakriti)*. The non-Vedic atomic theory of the Buddhists is very interesting, for it starts by negating the existence of every eternal substance, atomic or elemental. The atoms are indivisible.

The Naiyayikas dispute the indivisibility thesis of the Buddhists. The latter's view that atoms, though not separately visible, are amenable to sense-knowledge has also been questioned by the former, who hold that atoms are transcendental *(atindriya)* and not perceptible by sense *(aindriyaka)*. The Naiyayikas also had to explain how the imperceptible atoms could be combined in the formation of perceptible objects. They claimed that two atoms *(paramanu)* form one binary *(dvyanuka)*, and that three or more *dvyanukas*, which is "great" and perceptible to the eye. The combination of *tryanukas* produces an object. In order to arrive at the conception of the atom the idea of the infinitesimal had to be applied to matter and, in addition, it had to be linked with the idea of its indestructibility. In its developed form this atomic theory tries to plausibly reconcile the eternity of matter with the changeability of the things produced by its combination.

In the final analysis, all cosmological systems are called upon to identify the relationship between **what is** and **what changes.** Monists such as Parmanidos and Samkara, while they give primacy to **what is,** hardly deny **what changes.** On the other hand, pluralists such as Democritus and the Buddhists—though they accord primacy to **what changes**—take pains to show how **what is** forms a necessary element in the relationship. Stability and change are two persistent verdicts of experience which can hardly be doubted by the fluxist or the absolutist and, therefore, have to be related and explained by the principles of *rita* or *namos, maya* or *demiurgua* or *vishvakarma.*

The interesting similarities that one finds in the Indian and the Greek cultures, in their cosmological systems, religions and mythologies cannot be neatly captured and explained by the diffusionist hypothesis. These two great ancient cultures retain certain influences from their historical interaction and exchange, and, in certain aspects, have developed in a parallel fashion. The most surprising factor in the evaluation of their respective culture is that, conquered and governed by many external rulers, these countries have survived all vicissitudes and succeeded in internalising and assimilating the positive contributions of all immigrants without losing their own identity. The common experience of external aggression and occupation, rich cultural heritage, and sincere commitment to the ideals of freedom, peace and understanding, are bound to bring India and Greece closer to each other. The account of Indo-Greek relations is not only a matter of the philosophical and historical past; it has much relevance to the people of today and tomorrow.

THE MONASTIC TRADITION

Paul Gregorios

The cultures, civilisations and religious philosophies of Hind and Hellas are not as independent of each other as many Indians and Greeks might assume.



PHILOSOPHY

بنیکی دم اندیشه را رهنمون — نیارد دم آن نیکی را برون
همه پاسداران آن آستان — گرفتند عبرت بدان داستان
ثنا گفت بر روی چون شاه این نشیم — برآن پیکر آن نقش را زو شنید
مغنی بدان ساز بسیار شد — نشاط برانگیز ماند بروز
نگر زان نوای بریشم نواز — بریشم کشد روم را در طراز
چنین آمد از فیلسوف این سخن — سکندر چو شد تازه دوران کهن

مجلس سکندر با هفت حکیم

بپیروزی بخت فرخنده فال — درآمد ببخشیدن ملک و مال
نهادند سر خسروان بر درش — بفرمان دهی گشته فرمان برش
سخن راند از انصاف و از دین و داد — گهی درج می بست و گه می گشاد
ازان فیلسوفان گزین کرد هفت — که بر خاطر کس خطایی نرفت
فلاطون و والیس و فرفوریوس — که روح القدس کردشان دستبوس
ز بس بخشش و داد در مرز و بوم — برافتاد درویشی از اهل روم
بفرخندگی شاه فیروز بخت — یکی روز بر پشت پیروزه تخت
چو لختی سخن گفت از آن در که بود — بخلوت گه خویش غایب نمود
ارسطو که بد مملکت را وزیر — بلیناس برنا و سقراط پیر
همان هفتمین هرمس نیکرای — که بر هفتمین آسمان کرد جای
چنین هفت پرگار بر گرد شاه — بران دایره شه شده نقطه گاه



1 General view of Ajanta Caves, Maharashtra
Photo, J. A. Hedao

2 Alexander with the Philosphers of India, illumination from an Islamic manuscript
M. 471, f. 330
Collection & Courtesy, The Pierpont Morgan Library, New York

Though India and Greece are widely separated, the geographic gulf between them is bridged by a sense of kinship that is both ancient and deep. Generally, people look upon the Greek culture as the matrix of Western civilisation and consider Indian culture as being exclusively Eastern. However, this is too limited a view. Further exploration and study will show the extent to which Indian elements have shaped Greek civilisation as well as how contact with Greek culture triggered the classical development of India over the seven centuries covering 330 B.C. to A.D. 350.

As we study the civilisations of India and Greece it becomes apparent that they both freely borrowed from the ancient civilisations of the Near East—those of the Sumerians and Akkadians, Babylonians and Assyrians, Medes and Chaldeans, Hebrews and Armenians, Phoenicians and Iranians as well as the Egyptians, the Hyksos and the Hittites. All these people contributed many new ideas to what was then the centre of the world. Both India and Greece have drunk deeply at the fountains of the Fertile Crescent.

The British historian, E. R. Bevan of Oxford, narrates the story of a group of Indians, growers of vine and ivy, who told Alexander that they were the direct descendants of Dionysius, God of the Vine.[1] Long before the advent of Alexander, Dionysius, according to legend, had gone to conquer Asia, arrived in India and settled in the mountain country.

Contact between the two civilisations had previously been established; the impact, however, of Alexander's expedition to India, on both civilisations is often underestimated. It was an international army that marched through India under him in 330-326 B.C. consisting of Balkans, Thracians, Cretans, Macedonians, Bactrians and Nubians. Many Indian kings surrendered but the war was both bloody and brutal. During his brief occupation of India (three to four years), Alexander established many European-Middle-Eastern settlements in various parts of the Punjab; he named each nucleus city "Alexandria." These colonies considerably influenced the culture of north-west India.

While Alexander's military exploits play a significant role in the history of Indo-Greek relations, more pertinent to our discussion is his curiosity about Eastern religious manifestations. Perhaps among the most interesting was that of the 'naked ascetic' of India. During his travels he encountered Kalanos of Takshasila who appears to have been a Jain monk. From Greek accounts it is difficult to precisely assess the reaction of the Greeks to Indian asceticism, but it is not inaccurate to assume that some of those who were in Alexander's entourage, such as Nearchos, were deeply moved by the monk's act of self-immolation by fire and duly impressed by the calm with which the man sat, totally immobile and detached while the flames consumed him alive.[2] Both Strabo and Arrian refer to the eye-witness account of Nearchos which quite possibly sowed the seed of Stoic philosophy, for it was the concept of a dispassionate approach to suffering and death that Stoicism later sought to develop as its central tenet.

It is known that the African Alexandria served as a meeting ground between the Indian and Greek cultures. During the first three centuries of the Christian Era, the African city of Alexandria had become the intellectual and cultural centre of the Hellenic civilisation. Its museum, with a collection of half a million scrolls, incorporated the personal library of Aristotle. It was also the focal point of scientific and philosophical research and employed a hundred professors (paid by the Ptolemaic king) to teach every conceivable subject. Some of the great teachers were Ctesibus and Philo of Byzantium (mechanics and pneumatics), Herophilus and Erasistratus (anatomy and physiology), Euclid, Eratosthenos and Hipparchus (astronomy). The museum covered one-fourth of the total area of the city.

Savants from every part of the world flocked to this stimulating centre of cultural achievement. Greeks had begun to sail to India by the first century,[3] and several scholars from India had also come to the Greek dominions. Among them were both Brahmans and Buddhists.[4] That religious contacts were made is evident by the fact that Clement of Alexandria (*c.* A.D. 150 to *c.* A.D. 214) refers to the Buddha.[5] One of the

philosophers was Aristotle's nephew, Pyrrho, who went to India before 275 B.C. and was deeply affected by Indian philosophy. One Sikritos, a cynic, also accompanied Alexander on the expedition.

In the Alexandrias of India the philosophical meeting between the two cultures continued for many years. The *Milinda Panha* (Questions of Menander) speaks of Sakala (Sialkot), a city whose streets "resound with cries of welcome to teachers of every creed, and the city is the resort of the leading men of each of the different sects."[6]

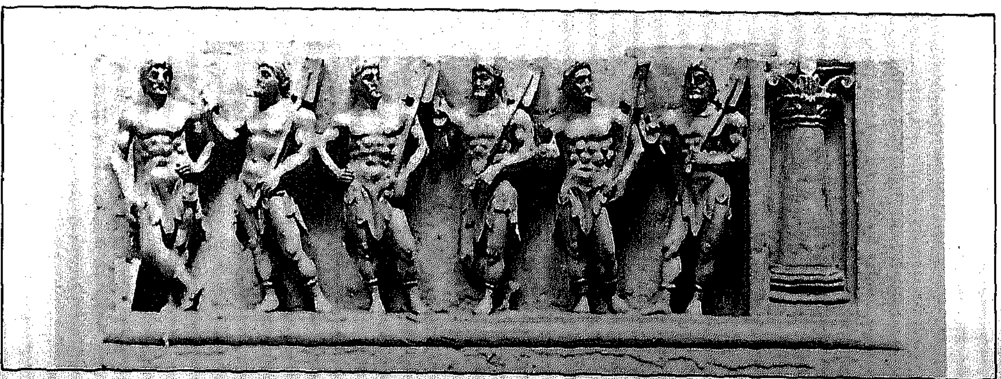
The legendary tale of Apollonius of Tyana (died *c.* A.D.97) by Philostratus[7] (died *c.* A.D. 225), which was the account of a philosophical debate between Greeks and Hindus (or Buddhists) in the first century, should not be disregarded as mere romantic fiction. Possibly the Christians had a special interest in discrediting the story of Apollonius; Apollonius was later built up into a Christ-like figure by anti-Christians in order to show that Christ-like sanctity could be developed outside Christianity. Indian beliefs were introduced to the Greek world of the first century A.D. Christianity did not develop isolated from the ideas of Hindu thinkers. One of the basic tenets of Christian philosophy is "know thyself." This tenet was also the characteristic formulation for the goal of philosophy in Greek thought (*Gnothi Seauton).* Philostratus tells us that the first question the Greek philosophers put to Hindu sages was whether "they knew themselves." The reply was:

> "If we know the All, then we must first know ourselves, but we could not have attained true knowledge, had we not been first known to ourselves."

The Indo-Greek Kingdoms

The Greeks ruled over north-west India (Punjab and Sind, Gandhara and Afghanistan) for two eventful centuries. The military campaigns of Demetrius, King of Bactria (*c.* B.C. 180-165) reached Patna (then Pataliputra) which was the capital of the Mauryan empire of Magadha. This is why Indian *Puranas* abound with stories of the "viciously valient Greeks." In the light of our topic of ancient Indo-Greek contacts, it is worthwhile to explore the development of early Indian literature, including the epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata,* as well as the dramas of Asvaghosha (second century A.D.), Bhasa (fourth century A.D.) and Kalidasa (fifth century A.D.). Conceivably, drama was a gift from Greece to Indian literary form. The Indo-Greek, as well as the Indo-Parthian kingdoms, regularly staged Greek plays. The drama of Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides and Aristophanes were translated into the Prakrit language from the second century B.C. Some scholars even see the inspiration for the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* as deriving from the Prakrit translations of the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad* by Homer.

Some think that Menander, a Greek king, embraced the Buddhist religion. Greek kings such as Menander also introduced Alexandrian astronomy and other Hellenic sciences to India. Varahamihira (mid-sixth century A.D.) speaks of Greek astronomers who were still residing in India in his time, and his *Panchasiddhantika* explicitly refers to Greek teachers and teachings. Galen, Hippocrates and other Greek physicians were also known to Indians and the debt of the Charaka and Susruta to Greek medicine is considerable.



3

3 Stair-riser with marine deities
1st century A.D., Gandhara
Schist, h 16.83 cm approx.
Collection: Trustees of The British Museum, London
Courtesy, The Cleveland Museum of Art

Emperor Kanishka in the second century A.D. employed a Greek engineer, Agasilaus, for designing and constructing Buddhist stupas and monasteries. Gandhara art, to which Greeks and Romans lay equal claim, was developed and carried elsewhere in India by Buddhist monks. The Kushana empire provided a powerfully stimulating cultural milieu where Greek, Roman, Persian, Indian and Chinese cultures mingled with, and moulded each other. Classical Indian philosophical and literary developments could be traced to these events. This is not to say that India borrowed uncritically from Greek literature. The argument is merely that contact provided the necessary stimulus for a cultural and literary awakening.

India's Impact on Christianity

This third section is likely to be controversial in nature because it is not yet fully documented.

Clearly, the two most powerful elements in the shaping of Classical Christian thought were Christian monasticism and the early (fourth century) Christian Fathers. The origin of Christian monasticism is often traced only to the deserts of Egypt. But Antonine and Pachomian monasticism, which spread to Syria and Palestine, has an older ancestry. The influence of Buddhist monks and Chaldean mystics on the Jewish monasticism of the Qumran communities, two centuries prior to and after Christ, needs further study. The legend of Barlaam and Joasaph, traditionally attributed to St. John of Damascus, is a patently Christianised Buddhist story that was adapted from Indian-Buddhist sources to glorify Christian monasticism. The story concerns Joasaph, the son of an Indian king, who was converted from Buddhism to Christianity. It is now well established that the original, which lacks the conversion ingredient, is Buddhist.[8]

Buddhist monks travelled all over the world, especially during the reign of the Indian Emperor Ashoka (269-232 B.C.), the great and brutal conqueror who became both a pacifist and a Buddhist after the bloody conquest of Kalinga. Buddhism spread to Central Asia, to Tibet, Mongolia and China, as well as to the West. One of the Greek kings of the Punjab, Menander (also known as Milinda), seems to have become a Buddhist and a patron of the great Buddhist philosopher-monk, Nagasena. The Gandhara school of art, which is both Graeco-Roman and Indian-Buddhist, stands testimony to the merging of the Buddhist and Hellenic civilisations.

Christianity came to India through Christ's apostle, St. Thomas, who made many converts both in the north-west—which had been thoroughly Hellenised by that time—and all the way down to the Coromandel Coast, presently known as Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

It was about this time (first century A.D.) that the Greeks entered the spice trade, and travel between India and Greece became regular. Many Buddhists and Brahmans travelled to Rome and Alexandria. Professor Emile Brehier of the Sorbonne has suggested, in his book *La Philosophie de Plotin,* that the Indian element was a catalyst in the culture of Alexandria, and gave rise to the mystical element in neo-Platonism.[9] Victor Chapot, whom Brehier cites, describes Alexandria as "having seen constantly passing or dwelling a cosmopolitan cohort; the small bronzes and the miniature earthenware statues help us discern the very diverse ethnic types... Greeks, Italians, Syrians, Libyans, Cilicians, Ethiopians, Bactrians, Scythians, Indians, Persians..."[10]

Professor Brehier's argument, written more than half a century ago, was furiously contested at that time. It is still worth our attention. Plotinus (A.D. 205-270), who taught in Alexandria and Rome, has two central ideas: (1) the intelligibility of the universe; the human mind's capacity to penetrate beyond appearance and to know reality in its undifferentiated oneness; (2) the total union of beings with the One and the overcoming of duality. It is this latter concept that the West has termed 'mysticism'. Brehier argues that it was the contact with Indian thought that transformed the Socratic Pythagorean and Stoic notions of the inner logos of the cosmos and the

unity that stems from it, into the notion of a 'mystical union' of the All with the One. But he also says:

"In fact, through Plotinus... directly or indirectly, Hellenic ideas penetrated the West. It is therefore important to find out whether he has introduced, along with Hellenism, currents of ideas of a different nature."[11]

What is the nature of these non-Hellenic ideas that Plotinus and neo-Plotonism introduced to the West, and which obviously exerted a tremendous influence on Christian monks and priests such as Augustine of Hippo or Gregory of Nyssa? Plotinus formulates the idea this way:

"As one who approaches the All and does not remain apart, you would never say: 'I am such and such'; as one who has become the All, you have left all that you had come to be and all you first experienced. You were that which you were, only by adding something to what you really are; it was this addition that made you less than what you are; for this surplus does not come from Being, for nothing can be added to Being; what was added to Being was non-Being. Something of non-Being thus added, Being becomes less than Being, less than the All; this surplus you throw away and you become the All."[12]

Clearly this line of thought has no antecedent, in either Hellenic or Egyptian philosophy. It is pure Vedanta. The *Atma* (Individual Soul) has only to shed its *avidya* (nescience) to realise its identity with the *Paramatma* (Supreme Soul). And the failure to recognise the source of this idea in neo-Platonism, and in Western mysticism in general, seems difficult to justify.[13]

On what basis did Plotinus develop this idea? Did he have any direct contact with Indian thought? The answer to that question is provided by his contemporary, classmate and biographer, the Syrian Porphyry. Prophyry, a strong anti-Christian (or possibly an ex-Christian), was a great admirer and devotee of Plotinus. The matter of Indian origins has been thoroughly researched by Professor Willy Theiler and others.[14]

Ammonius Saccas, the teacher of both Plotinus and Origen, strangely refused to put anything in writing—a practice reminiscent of the Indian oral tradition. He was almost certainly a Vedantin, but not necessarily an Indian. During the eleven years that Plotinus studied under Ammonius, one of the ideas acquired was that of the union of the Many with the One (or the realisation of their given unity). Plotinus also had a great desire to go to India, and Porphyry directly attributes this desire to Ammonius. Plotinus accompanied the Roman Emperor Gordian (A.D. 243) on an expedition to Persia, specifically to acquaint himself with Indian and other Eastern philosophies. When he returned from Persia, without succeeding in his plans go to India, he set up his own school in Rome in A.D. 244. What we today call 'Western mysticism' thus has its major source in the *Upanishads* and in Hindu teachers who came West.

Plotinus saw contemplation (Indian *dhyana*) rather than rational thought as the true way to wisdom and realisation. The practice of contemplation is not exclusively Indian. It could have its roots in Plato. However, the form in which Western Christianity absorbed this notion can be traced directly from Plotinus, and possibly the Middle Platonists. In Plotinus, contemplation used as a way of reconciling the individual soul with the One, definitely has its source in the Indian tradition when we consider the relevance of Ammonius Saccus and his Hindu and Buddhist connections.

Christian mysticism was largely shaped by the writings of St. Augustine of Hippo (A.D. 354-430). Augustine's basic philosophical framework, even in his specifically Christian writings, shows a great influence on neo-Platonism. His thought has had a profound and pervasive effect on the primary concepts of Western civilisation. Even in their reactions to medieval Christiandom, both Protestants and Catholics cited Augustine as their main authority.

Augustine introduced to Christianity the idea that the human soul should turn away from sensible things to achieve a union with God. Although the form in which the idea was applied in Western mysticism is not Indian, it definitely has an Indian heritage. Over the ages, the Indian perception has played a large part in the shaping of Western Classical mysticism.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1 Bevan, E. R.; *Cambridge History of India;* Indian Edition (1962); Vol I; p. 317

2 Arrian; vii:3

3 The ships navigated the Red Sea and used the monsoon winds to cross the Arabian Sea.

4 The taboo against ocean travel must have come much later as a consequence, conceivably, of resistance to the strange doctrines that Indian travellers often brought back from abroad.

5 Clement of Alexandria; *Stromateis* I: 15. He uses the Pali spelling *Boutta*

6 Udadhyaya, B. S.; *Feeders of Indian Culture;* People's Publishing House; New Delhi 1973; p. 49

7 Text in *vita Apollinii* in the Loeb Classical Library; Ed. F.C. Conybeare; 2 vols.; 1912; Eng. Tr. J. S. Phillimore; 2 vols.; 1912

8 *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church;* London (Oxford University Press) 1958; *sub vocum* BARLAAM AND JOASAPH

9 Brehier, Emile; *La philosophie de Plotin;* Paris 1928; Intro: pp. xviii-xix

10 Chapot, Victor; *Le Monde Romain;* Paris 1927, cited by Brehier, *op. cit.*

11 Brehier; *op. cit.;* p. 109 (Eng. Tr. present writer)

12 Plotinus; *Enneads;* vi:5:12; Eng. Tr. present writer; Brehier's edition of Plotinus; Vol. VI; p. 212; lines 16 ff

13 The Western anxiety to show that Plotinus was not influenced by anything Oriental finds expression in many works. One of the earliest is H. K. Mueller; *Orientalisches bei Plotinos;* Hermes 49 (1914) pp. 70-80. The main purpose of the article is to refute the thesis of Iranian or Persian influence on Plotinus. A. H. Armstrong, a leading Plotinian scholar in Britain, has sought to refute the thesis of Brehier (chapter VII on "L'Orientalisme de Plotin" in *La philosophie de Plotin;* Paris 1938; pp. 107-133), in an article in the Classical Quarterly 30 (1936), on *Plotinus and India;* pp. 22-28. Armstrong's argument amounts only to an attempt to understand Plotinus in terms of earlier Greek concepts, but does not deal with the historical evidence. A. Szabo in his *Indische Elemente in Platonischen Neoplatonismus;* Scholastik 13 (1938); pp. 57-96 argued on the basis of similarity of ideas between Plotinus and the Sankhya system of Indian philosophy. For a brief counter-argument see J. F. Staal; *Advaita and Neoplatonism;* University of Madras, 1961; pp. 240-242.

J. Filliozat, in his *La doctrine des brahmanes d'apres Saint Hippolyte in Revue de l'Histoire des Religions* 130 (1945) pp. 59-91, argued on the basis of Hippolytus' (c. 170-c.236) *Refutation of All Heresies,* in favour of detailed knowledge of Indian thought in the West at the beginning of the third century A.D.

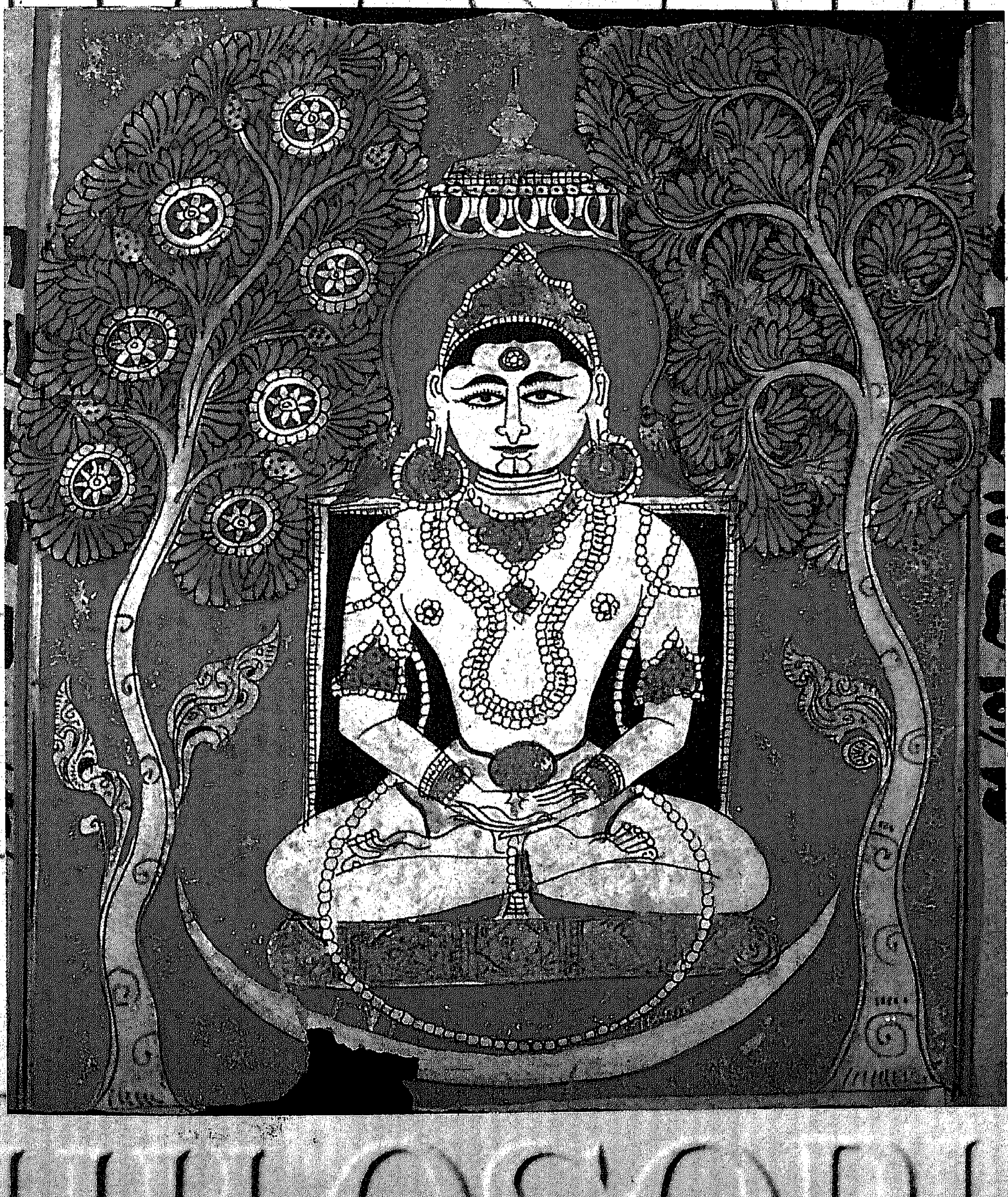
Richard Garbe's *India and Christendom: The Historical Connections Between their Religions* (Eng. Tr. La Salle; Illinois 1959), was in the form of articles in the *Deutsches Rundschau.* He spoke already about Buddhist influences on the *New Testament* and the *Apocryphal Gospels,* and on Christian worship, as well as about Christian influences in Buddhism and Hinduism. His arguments for Christian influence in the *Gita* doctrines of a personal God and the love of God from which arises the true knowledge of God, have not been well received. Garbe quotes with approval Lorinser's (in a metrical German translation of the *Bhagavadgita;* Breslau 1869) view "that the author of the *Bhagavad Gita* not only was acquainted with the writings of the *New Testament* and made frequent use of them, but wove Christian ideas and views into his system."

14 Theiler, Willy; *For schangan zum Neoplatonismus: Quellen und Studien zur Geschichte; der Philosophie;* Berlin 1966

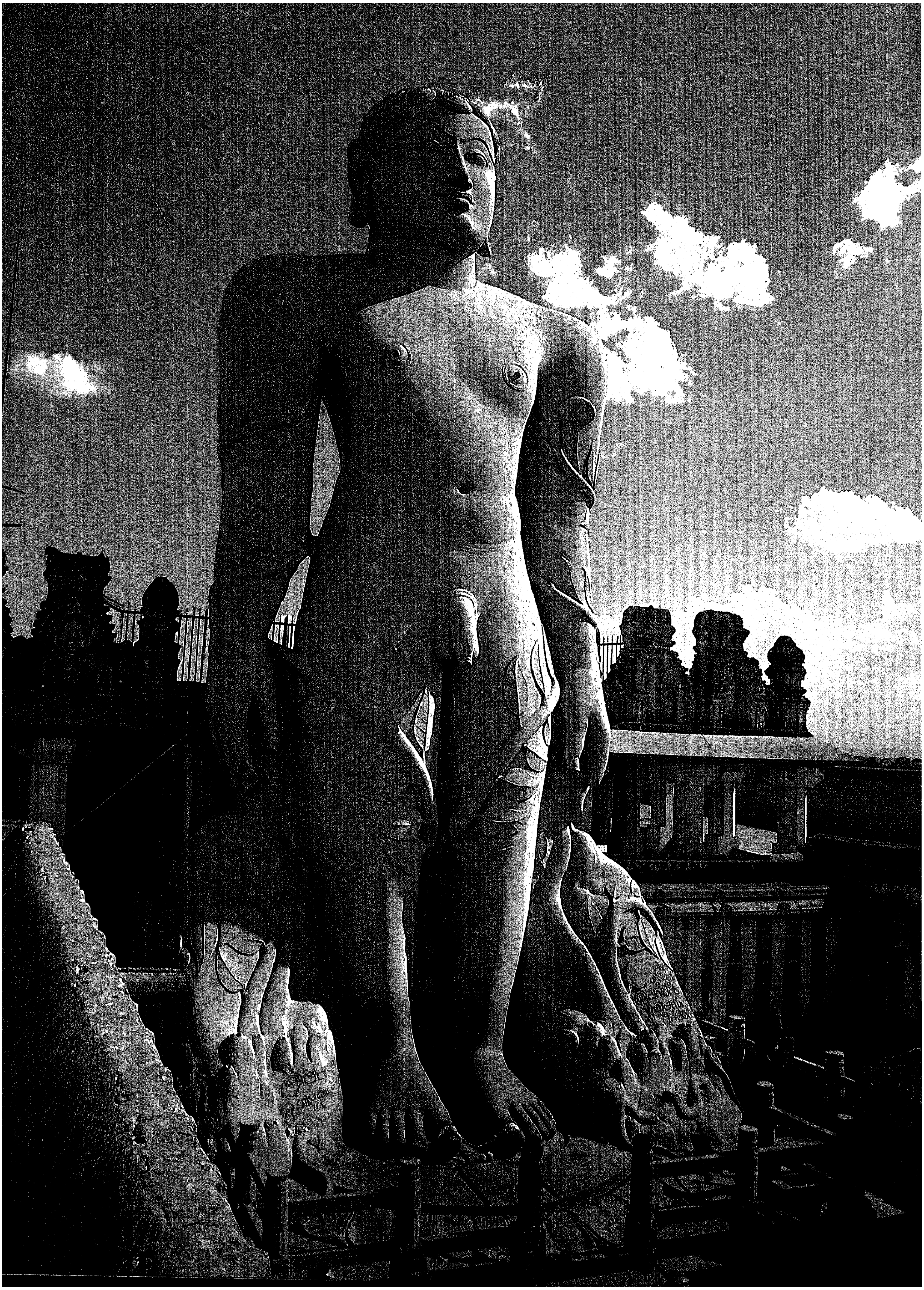
A CONFLUENCE OF THOUGHT

Mary L. O'Hara

Before the time of Socrates, Greek philosophy, like the philosophy of India, is generally to be found embedded in religious myth.



1



1 **Mahavir** *(Kalpasutra & Kalakacharya Katha)*
Late 14th century A.D., Western Indian Style
Paper, 30 x 8.8 cm
Collection: Prince of Wales Museum of Western India, Bombay
Courtesy, Trustees of the Prince of Wales Museum of Western India, Bombay

2 **Statue of Bahubali or Gommateshvara**
A.D. 981, Indragiri Hill, Shravana Belgola
Granite, h. 18 m
Courtesy, Karmayogi Bhattaraka Charukirtiji, Shravana Belgola; Photo, Saryu Doshi

Even in Plato, "we find the same tendency" as in Indian philosophy "towards glorifying the unspeakable entity as the reality or the essence."[1] Plato's Socrates, as he was being put to death for atheism, took care to provide for the offering of the prescribed sacrifice.[2] Exceptional are thinkers like Xenophanes and Heraclitus, who question the received religion.[3] With the development of Aristotle's philosophy within the Platonic school, however, a change took place that would influence the future development of Western philosophy and, most of all, Western science. Two centuries before Aristotle, the "heterodox"[4] Jain doctrine in India dealt with questions similar to those considered by Aristotle. A comparison of some points in the two doctrines will serve to bring out the parallels and differences between the ways in which the two schools of thought approach similar questions. No claim is made here that Aristotle was influenced by Jain thought; further investigation and additional evidence would be needed to establish such a claim. The present inquiry can however serve to indicate the general area in which such influence might be sought.

In what follows, Aristotelian logic, physics and psychology will be considered for what they can tell about the distinctive Aristotelian approach to the questions of knowledge, the divine, and the human soul. Then Jain doctrines on the same questions will be examined briefly. Finally some concluding reflections will be offered.

Aristotle

Logic

Aristotle's analytical mind distinguished one science from another, one being from another, assigning each its place in view of an ordering principle, the 'final cause'. For Plato, 'dialectic' is the often inconclusive argument carried on in the *Dialogues;* for Aristotle, it is the preliminary exercise, preparatory to the establishment of rigorous scientific proof. What characterises Aristotle's logic is a strict deduction from principles and, previous to that, an induction from sense experience to principles.[5] It is scientific proof that becomes the standard for logic itself, for the other sciences, from physics to ethics, that Aristotle himself worked out, and for future sciences down to the present time.[6]

The Greek term *sophia* (wisdom) Aristotle found to be a convenient means for organising his theory of sciences: wisdom is the highest kind of knowledge, the wise man is recognised as having the deepest or most extensive knowledge in any sphere, and there exists a branch of knowledge, wisdom simply so called, that deals with the very highest objects of human understanding. This science, which Aristotle called first philosophy or theology, is what is to be found in his work known today as *Metaphysics.* On this understanding of the word 'wisdom', the architect of a building is said to be 'wiser' than the worker constructing the building: the architect understands what the worker is doing, and he also knows why this is to be done, since he knows the entire plan according to which the work is being carried on. The science of physics (that is, the science elaborated in Aristotle's book called *Physics*), is, in this arrangement of sciences, 'wisdom' relative to the other natural sciences, but less wisdom than is metaphysics. In a sense, it can be said that the science of physics exists **for the sake of metaphysics,** which later is the highest (or deepest) science in Aristotle's system. One studies physics, on this understanding of the matter, so as to prepare oneself for learning metaphysics. Metaphysics deals with the divine, but not precisely with a god to be worshipped or invoked; it is the simple contemplation of the divine that makes the human being as god-like as possible.[7]

Aristotle deals with ethical as well as logical and natural questions; it is not clear that, for him, practical (that is, ethical) sciences rank either above or below theoretical ones. Within the theoretical sciences, mathematics ranks above physics and below metaphysics. But as the highest theoretical science, defending principles as well as conclusions, wisdom is needed to justify the principles of ethics itself.

Physics and the Proof of a Divine Goal

In his interest in developing natural science, Aristotle stands alone among ancient Western thinkers whose works are extant. In the *Physics* Aristotle

argues for a natural science distinct from metaphysics, a science based upon the observation that change evidently takes place in nature. For change to occur, Aristotle sees certain requirements to be necessary: first of all, there must be a prior, 'potential', state of the changing thing, and a posterior, 'actual', state into which it changes.[8] It is this principle of potentiality and actuality, seen as underlying all change in nature, that is the key to the central demonstration of the book: the proof that there must be a 'First Unmoved Mover,' a "divine and good goal of movement"[9] in the universe, to account for all motion within it. The Mover thus demonstrated is shown to be a non-material, that is, a spiritual being, and so, distinct from every material being in the universe.[10] In the example of change of place, a train travelling from one town to another would remain in its previous 'potential' state unless it received energy from some source such as fuel and guidance from the person who operates it. An actual source of energy for every motion that takes place is needed, and this source cannot finally be derived from a thing in itself potential. It is not, however, the source of change in the sense of the activating fuel, or of the person who guides the train, that Aristotle identifies as the source of all the motion, but rather what he calls the 'final' cause—the goal or purpose that sets in motion the entire occurrence.

The doctrine of the four 'causes' of change, elaborated in the *Physics* and throughout his works, is Aristotle's distinctive contribution to scientific enquiry. It is through finding the reason, in the sense of the purpose, for a given function that one begins to understand the source of the energy through which it takes place, the precise nature of the matter that composes the changing thing, and the two forms, the previous and the later one, that enable it to change.[11] It is only a good goal that finally is able to determine movement or change to occur, Aristotle sees.

The conclusion of the dense arguments of the *Physics* is that outside the physical universe in which changes take place there must be a divine being of a non-physical, that is, a spiritual nature.[12] It is in some sense in striving after this being that all motion in the universe takes place.

What is to be noticed in all this development is that Aristotle neither assumes nor denies the existence of a divine being; rather he supposes that the existence of such a being is susceptible to proof, and he offers the proof in his book on the universe.

For Aristotle, motion into and out of a place requires that the place be real, much as a pocket is. Moreover, the body that is in a place must be really extended, as to its smallest part; at no level does a body simply disappear into non-extended points, for if it did, there would be no possibility of its ever being constituted a really extended body, since nothing comes from nothing.[13]

For Aristotle, the universe is eternal, and time is only a mental reality, the number of a motion showing what comes before and what after. It is a way human beings have of estimating the duration of a motion by comparing it with other motions, notably those of the stars and the sun and moon, obvious and dependable time gauges.[14]

Time's importance for Aristotle lies in the contribution it makes to the demonstration of the soul's non-material character. Without a soul to count it, time would be impossible. In thus showing the close connection between his doctrine of the soul and that of time, Aristotle foreshadows two features of his psychological doctrine: that of the relation of memory and recollection to the soul, and that of the *eidos* (soul as form) of the body.[15]

Soul

Every body, every material being, has a form; it is the form that makes the matter of a thing to be a "thing of this sort." Living beings have as their form a soul, a principle of life. Aristotle is at pains, in a number of works, to point out the relation between human beings and other animals. In the small work *On Memory and Recollection*, for example, he attributes memory to other animals as well as to human beings, but recollection to human beings alone.[16] He goes on to point out that once a person has started the process of trying to recall something, he may decide to give up his unsuccessful search for the forgotten information, but remain annoyed at not having found it. This

annoyance, "which persists even when they have abandoned the attempt to recollect," shows Aristotle that they have "set in motion a bodily part" which continues to work even against their mental decision."[17]

It is this sort of evidence that shows recollection to involve a bodily as well as a mental component and that leads Aristotle to affirm that the soul, although "not a body, . . . is associated with a body, and therefore resides in a body, and in a body of a particular kind, not at all as our predecessors supposed, who fitted it to any body, although it is unknown for any chance thing to admit any other chance thing."[18] It is the individual existent substantial being that most interests Aristotle. He analyses the living being as an organic whole into two co-principles, an active soul, "the first act of the physical organic body potentially living,"[19] and a totally receptive and undifferentiated matter which is made into this or that individual by the soul or form.[20]

On the question of an afterlife for the soul, Aristotle in the extant works does not have a clearly demonstrated doctrine. He appears to vacillate, and he says nothing about what such a state might be like.[21] His is not so much a doctrine about liberation in a future existence as about how to live well in the present circumstances of life. For Aristotle, the happiest state of human beings will be that in which, passion having been subdued, they will occupy their intellects in contemplating the divine. Very different from Aristotle's this-worldly ideal is that of the Jain sages.

Jainism

Logic

A peculiarity of Jain logic and of the resulting Jain ontology is the doctrine of seven-fold predication. Since things can be seen from many points of view, it can be said, according to this doctrine, that (from one point of view) "a thing is, and it is not" (from another).[22] The relativism of these statements contrasts sharply with the statements of Aristotle's demonstrative logic. Perhaps the Jain doctrine might be accommodated within Aristotle's system, however; to find a place within the Jain system for Aristotle's logic would, on the other hand, seem difficult if not impossible. Jain logic does not seek to establish an incontrovertible truth as a scientific conclusion; rather it is the inevitably partial nature of all human knowledge that it affirms.[23]

Doctrine on the Divine

For the Jain thinker, the notion of a god independent of this world contains numerous implicit contradictions, for example that to a Jain a creative god seems a needy god, and so impossible. It is not an objective god that the Jain worships; rather he endeavors to realise the divine potentiality within himself, and he honors those who, like Mahavira, have attained the complete knowledge and perfect bliss of *moksha,* liberation as individuals in a world free from the cycle of rebirth. Unlike Artistotle who demonstrates the existence of the divine, the Jain thinker would deny that such a demonstration could be made.[24]

Doctrine on the World

Like Aristotle, the Jain thinker is an epistemological realist. Perhaps because of the difference in logic between the two schools of thought, however, the Jain sees the world quite differently from Aristotle. In Jain thought, time is a real being, not merely a mental entity as it is for Aristotle. Space is also a fundamental real entity of the Jain cosmology. The Jain theory of space is that of a real substance, *dravya,* which is non-corporeal, non-living, infinite in extent, and eternal. A peculiarity of the Jain conception is that space includes both the universe and the non-universe. As a corollary to this idea of space, Jain doctrine postulates also two additional real entities, *dharma* and *adharma,* the first being the medium of motion and the second that of rest. These media are present in the universe but not in the non-universe. Like Aristotle, Jain thought assumes that the world is eternal.[25] The Jain doctrine of matter, unlike Aristotle's, postulates a matter composed ultimately of non-extended atoms.

Doctrine of the Soul and its Liberation

In Jain thought, the relation between soul and body in the human being takes place through and is the result of *karma*, which has both a metaphysical and an ethical character. For Jains, the soul is in some way identical with its own knowledge. Only some sort of karmic stain interferes with complete omniscience. It is to the removal of *karma* that the Jain ascetic devotes him or herself. In this way the ascetic is separated from the social and political constraints of householders.

It is most of all in the doctrine of *moksha* (liberation) that the Jain doctrine seems to differ from that of Aristotle. The Jain ascetic endeavours by his ascetic practice to fit himself to attain complete enlightenment, complete peace and bliss, as a soul separated from the body in a world outside the endless cycle of rebirth. In a favourable time the ascetic will himself be able to attain the characteristics of a divine being.

Fourteen spiritual stages are distinguished on the way to *moksha*, and the ascetic has gained such eminent knowledge in the last stages as to be able to enlighten others. Knowledge of the universe, in Jain theory, while it may be brought into accord with contemporary scientific findings, is in no way directly dependent upon them, nor is it directly falsifiable by them. It is gained through insight in which the self is more active than are the senses. The final goal of Jain asceticism—liberation—is at once the end of his own striving and the beginning of enlightenment for other human beings.

The liberation for perfect bliss and complete knowledge—that is the goal of the Jain ascetic—has meaning in a universe in which rebirth into a life of hardship is taken for granted. The Jain thinkers' other-worldly ideal for human beings grows out of the conviction that the relation, from all eternity, between the soul and matter, results from *karma*, understood as a kind of material entity as well as a moral reality. Getting rid of *karma* is at once an asceticism and a growth in knowledge.[26]

Although Aristotle wrote much, in several books, on ethical culture, he has no doctrine comparable to that of Jain asceticism. He would probably have found it extreme and anti-human. Aristotle regards insensibility as a lack of virtue; perhaps whether the Jain ascetic practices tend toward this extreme may depend upon the individual ascetic's understanding, experience and practice.

J. Filliozat has argued convincingly for the likelihood of intellectual interchange between India and the Greek cities of Ionia before the time of Alexander the Great.[27] Aristotle, Alexander's tutor, may have benefited from such exchange in his setting problems relating to the world, to the divine and to the human soul.

Reflective Conclusions

Whether or not intellectual exchanges occurred between India and Greece before the time of Alexander, it is instructive to consider the ways in which two such different styles of thought approach similar questions.

Every doctrine of nature as a whole—every 'natural philosophy'—necessarily exists in a context defined at once by the logic employed to demonstrate or defend its theses and by the relation in which it is understood to stand to other sciences. Thus the doctrine concerning nature can be understood to be itself the highest science or else to stand in a relation of subordination to some other knowledge.

Aristotle has shown that it is the intention of any work—the 'final cause'—that determines the way in which the work, whatever it may be, will be done. The person who propounds a natural philosophy will thus either intend it to be considered as the ultimate science or as related to a wisdom, a higher science, that judges its premises and conclusions.

From the point of view of fundamental orientation, the physical doctrine of the Jains appears to be subordinated to a practical wisdom, the doctrine of the way of life taught by such inspired teachers as the Tirthankaras. This orientation appears to be strikingly evident in the very first line of the *Tattvartha Sutra*: "Right belief, right knowledge, right conduct, these together constitute the path to liberation."[28] If right knowledge be taken to include the Jain physical doctrine, it is seen in this statement to conduce to an end beyond itself, that of ultimate liberation from the body and rebirth. Aristotle sees the union of body and soul as quite natural, as a condition from which liberation would probably be meaningless.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1 Dasgupta, Surendranath A.; *History of Indian Philosophy*; Delhi 1975; Vol. I; p. 42
2 Plato; *Phaedo*; pp. 117-18
3 Xenophanes, fragments 14-16. Heraclitus, fragments 1 and 5
4 Or non-orthodox; see Dasgupta; *op. cit.*; p. 68
5 Aristotle; *Posterior Analytics*; II, 19. *Metaphysics*; I, 1
6 Aristotle; *On the Soul*; III, 3
7 Aristotle; *Nicomachean Ethics*; X, 6-8
8 Aristotle; *Physics*; I, 8
9 *Physics*; I, 9, 192a15-20
10 *Physics*; VIII, 10
11 The material of a thing, when it undergoes change in the kind of being it is, loses the form that made it what it was before the change, and acquires the form that will make it the new thing, Aristotle teaches in *Physics*; V, 1
12 *Physics;* III, 1, 201a 20-30
13 *Physics*; I, 8, 191b13
14 *Physics*; IV, 14, 223b24
15 Aristotle; *On the Soul*; II, 2, 414a14
16 Aristotle; *On Memory and Recollection*; I, 450a18; II, 453a8-14
17 *On Memory*; II, 453a15-25
18 *On the Soul*; II, 2, 414a20-25
19 *On the Soul*; II, 1, 412a20-25
20 On the nature of matter, see *Physics*; I, 8 and 9
21 Contrast Aristotle; *On the Generation of Animals*; II, 3, 736b5-29 and *On the Soul*; III, 4, 429b3-6 with *On the Soul*; II, 2, 414a20-21
22 See, for a brief and sympathetic treatment Basham, A. L.; *The Wonder that was India*; New York 1959; pp. 502-3
23 Gopalan, S.; *Outlines of Jainism*; New York 1973; p. 152
24 Gopalan; *op. cit.*; pp. 37-43
25 Dasgupta; *op. cit.*; p. 197
26 See Pushpa Bothra; *The Jain Theory of Perception*; Delhi 1976; pp. 99-123
27 Filliozat, J.; *The Classical Doctrine of Indian Medicine: Its Origins and its Greek Parallels*; Delhi 1964; pp. 243-44 and Potter, Karl H.; *Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies*; Delhi 1977; II; pp. 16-17
28 *Tattvartha Sutram*; J. L. Jaini (Ed.); Delhi 1956; I, 1



Coin of Alexander the Great (336-323 B.C.): obverse
Courtesy, Shri Shukla; Photo, Sharad Madan

LITERATURE

METAMORPHOSES IN MYTH

U. P. Arora

Throughout history, every culture has produced an elaborate mythology in an effort to explain the nature of its origins and to impose order on a chaotic universe.



1

LITERATURE



2

1 Helmeted bust of Athene
Hellenistic (Alexandrian), Found at Begram (Afghanistan)
Bronze, h. 11 cm
Collection: Musee Guimet, Paris
Courtesy, Hallade M., *Gandharan Art of North India and the Graeco-Buddhist Tradition in India, Persia, and Central Asia*

2 Lid of a cosmetic jar decorated in relief with the figure of Apollo grasping Daphne by the wrist as she sinks onto a pile of rocks
2nd-5th century A.D., Gandhara, Charsadda
Schist
Collection: Victoria and Albert Museum, London
By Courtesy of the Trustees of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London;
Photo, Robert Skelton

Generally associated with this phenomenon is the theory of archetypes: that myths are essentially archetypal projections which lie deeply ensconced in the human psyche. As an act of creative thought, the myth has often been perceived as an art form. Yet, even if mythological traditions originate and evolve from the collective imagination of a society, unfettered by scientific considerations and linear thought processes, they are not entirely divorced from reality. A close analysis of common trends in the mythologies of two cultures, for example, may reveal many obscure facts about the relationship between two civilisations. And it is towards this objective that comparative mythologists direct their research.

In ancient Greece, there existed two points of view regarding the nature of myth. One interpreted it as the apotheosis of human events[1] whereas the other defined it in terms of natural phenomena.[2] Similarly, sacred Indian texts exhibit different schools of thought, whose approach to the subject ranges from the naturalistic to the historical.[3] Whatever the general source of inspiration, the ancient cultures of India and Greece manifest certain analogous tendencies in their myths and legends. The presence of shared motifs between nations separated by vast distances, as well as the widespread recurrence of certain themes, would seem to suggest an independent, but parallel, reaction to a similar environmental stimulus. But the resemblances in the case of India and Greece are so conspicuous that the likelihood of entirely independent origin seems dubious.

Indo-European Origin

It is conceivable that some closely corresponding legends originated in one particular geographical area and were then disseminated throughout diverse regions by a migratory people such as the Indo-Europeans. Another possible explanation would be that of a process of cultural exchange and assimilation, necessitated by trade contact either before or after the advent of Alexander.

In the nineteenth century, European scholars such as Mueller, George Cox, John Fiske and Gubernatis postulated the theory of Indo-European Origin. It was advocated that the mythological parallels found among the Indians, Persians, Hittites, Greeks, Celts, Teutons, Romans and other European nations stemmed primarily from their shared geographical genesis.

The hymns of the *Rigveda*, which furnish the earliest examples of creation myths, may be regarded as the root of many Indo-European myths. Thus we find a number of linguistic and functional parallels among their deities: the Sanskrit *deva* (god) is the Greek *theos,* Latin *deus*, Lithuanian *dewas*, Irish *dia*, Lettish *dews*, Old Prussian *diews*, and Cornish *duy*. Vedic hymns address the heaven-god as Dyaus-Pitar, Zeus Pater in Greek, Jupiter in Latin, Tius in German and Tyr in Norse. The Vedic Varuna is comparable to Ouranos, the Lord of the celestial sea and the realm of light above it. Surya or Savitr, who drives across the sky in a flaming chariot, resembles the Greek Helios whose carriage is drawn by gold-coloured mares called *haritas*—a name in which may be recognised the roots of the Greek *charites*. Dioscouroi, the twin sons (Castor and Pollux) of Zeus have affinities with the Asvins of Vedic mythology—twin sons of the Sun or the Sky. The Vedic Usas (dawn) is Greek Eos; Sarameya is Hermes, Yavistha is Hephaustus, and Swaha may represent Hestia of the Greeks. The *gandharvas* (celestial beings) of Sanskrit literature have the *centauroi* as their Greek counterpart. The Greek Cerberos, the dog-like three-headed monster of the region of the dead, can be equated with the Vedic Sabala.

Indian Impact on Greek Fables and Folk Literature

In the realm of folk literature and fables, Greek tales similar to those of India appear in the *Historia* of Herodotus (fifth century B.C.). One of them is about a woman who is put in the dilemma of saving the life either of her husband or brother. She chooses that of the brother, thinking that only he is irreplaceable; another husband and child could be acquired.[4] This story occurs in the *Ramayana* and the *Jataka* texts. Another tale, similar to a *Jataka* story, is about a clever thief who manages to steal from the king's treasury in order to be rewarded by the king himself.[5] The third analogous story in the *Historia* is about a man, who, on account of dancing in an

indecent manner before his bride's father, loses the bride. It is identical to the *Jataka* story of a dancing peacock, except that the characters in the Indian context are not human beings.[6]

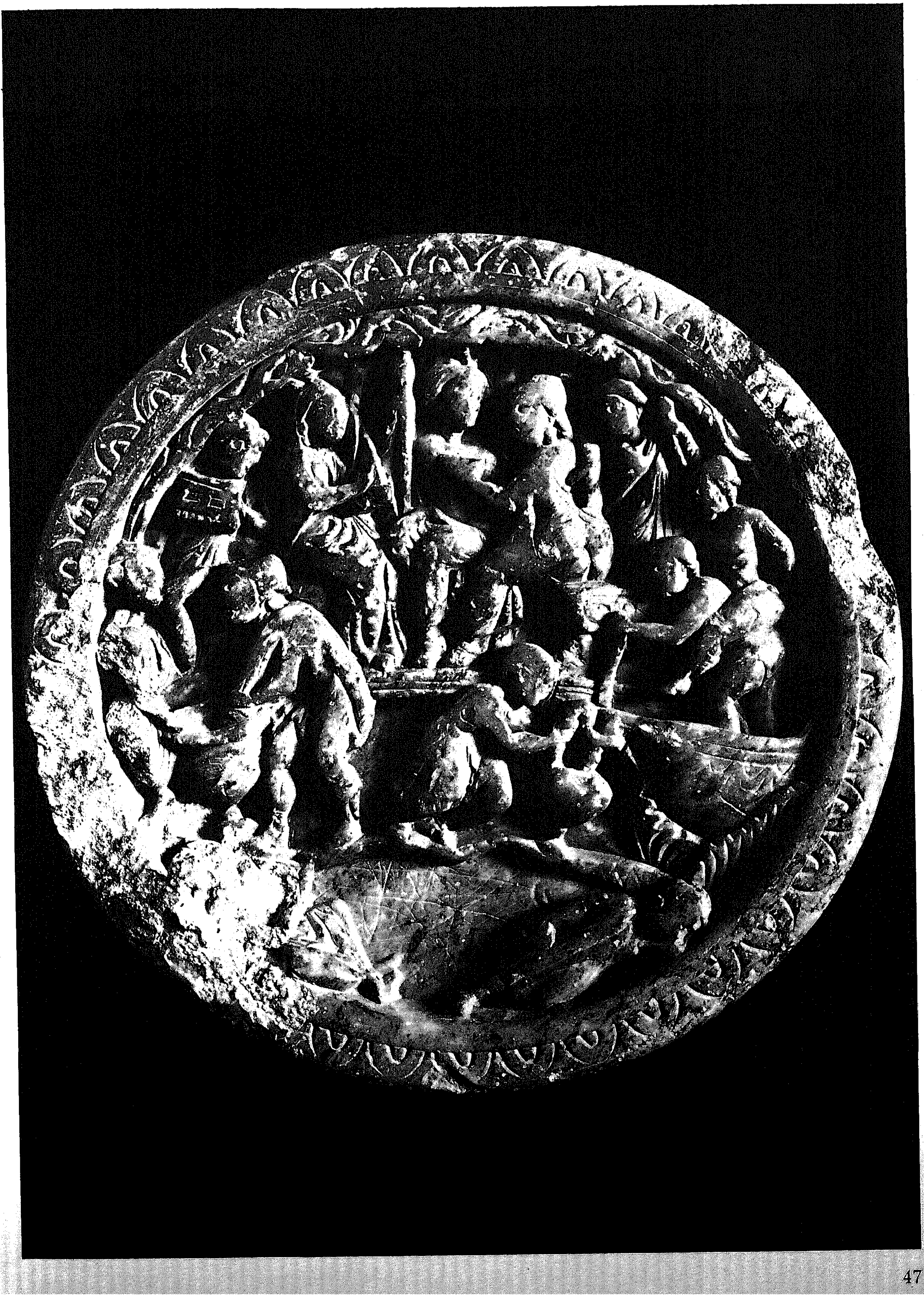
The animal fables of India and Greece are very close to each other. The more well-known of the Greek animal fables, of course, are those attributed to the Ionian slave, Aesop. They were quite popular in the fifth century B.C. and Socrates, Herodotus and Aristophanes have referred to them.[7] Like their Indian counterparts, Aesop's fables are short narratives in which birds or beasts rather than human beings serve as protagonists. Their purpose was to teach certain morals which were then explicitly stated at the end. In Aesop's fable, *The Ass in a Lion's Skin*, the skin in which the ass is disguised is blown off by the winds. In the *Jataka* version, the ass disguised in a lion's skin is betrayed by his own cry. The *Jataka* story, *The Swan Who Dropped the Tortoise*, appears in Aesop as *The Eagle Who Dropped the Tortoise*. Like these there are numerous similar fables of Greek and Indian stock.[8]

Regarding the relationship between the two, it may be said that the Indian fables on record date back to the Upanishadic period. They occur in the *Chhandogya-Upanishad* and the tradition may have been even older: Aesop's historicity is doubtful but his name was certainly known in the fifth century B.C. The fables associated with his name were put in book form firstly by Demetrius of Phaleron (350 B.C.) which, though lost, is said to be the basis for the famous collections of Phaedrus (first century A.D.) and Babrius (third century A.D.), which are still extant. Since the book of Demetrius of Phaleron is lost, we are not certain which of the fables in later collections came from his book. On the other hand, there is a greater possibility that the fables contained in the *Jatakas* and the *Panchatantra* are much older than their most ancient versions. The occurrence of certain *Jataka* tales in the *Sutta* and *Vinaya Pitakas* (fourth century B.C.) and the *bas-reliefs* depicting *Jataka* scenes in the stupas of Sanchi, Amravati, and especially of Bharhut, confirm their earlier date more than their literary form.[9] The oral tradition upon which these stories were inevitably based must have been considerably older. India appears to be the home of incarnation and the belief in metempsychosis. Therefore, it was natural for Indians to equate the behaviour of animals with that of humans, whereas in Greece such a belief did not continue. When one notices in these fables the cycle of rebirth, their didactic nature, the animals (peacock, lion, tiger, monkey) native to India, and the frequency with which the same fables occur in Indian sources but only once or twice in Greek texts, the theory of Indian origin of Greek fables is strengthened. The westward migration of Indian fables is further corroborated by the evidence of the thirty fables in the *Talmud* and in Midrashic literature. "Except in three or four cases, all these can be paralleled either in India or in Greece or in both. In the last instance the Talmudic form invariably follows the Indian, whenever it differs from the Greek."[10]

Not only were the fables based on the belief of metempsychosis but the belief itself seems to have migrated to Greece from India at an early date. After the sixth century B.C., certain ideas, characteristic also to those in India, begin to appear in Orphic philosophy and in the work of Pythagoras. The cycle of rebirth, based on *karma*, is as fundamental to Greece as it is to India. Also shared between the two cultures is the concept of soul held in bondage to the body and the practice of vegetarianism. Heracleitus (500 B.C.) described life as an infinitely living fire—the Buddha expounded a similar concept. Plato in his *Timaeus* perceives the universe in the manner of the Jains—as a living creature made up of different but interrelated parts. Since these ideals—akin to those represented in Indian thought—were alien to the mainstream tradition of the Greeks, there developed a view among the later Greeks that Pythagoras[11] and Plato[12] had actually derived their knowledge from India. Their visit to India in search of wisdom was also mentioned. The influence of Indian thought on Pythagoras is recognised by many modern scholars.

Although Indian ideals and animal fables appear to have reached Greece, it is difficult to formulate conclusions about the intermediaries. The Persian

3 Toilet tray showing Dionysius and Ariadne
Taxila, Punjab
Stone
Collection & Courtesy, National Museum, New Delhi



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empire (sixth-fifth centuries B.C.), of which both Ionian Greece – the Greek cities on the coast of Asia Minor – and the region around the River Indus were an integral part, must have provided ample opportunity for interaction between the Indian and Greek peoples. We get an account of the Greek navigator Scylax of Caryanda in Persian employ, who was sent by Darius I (521-486 B.C.) to sail around the Indus in order to discover its source.[13] Herodotus refers to Indian troops in the Persian army of Xerxes (486-465 B.C.).[14] Since, on account of residing in the Persian empire, the Ionian Greeks came into contact with the advanced civilisations of the Orient, the intellectual activities in Greece assumed form in Ionia rather than the mainland. The early Greek philosophers such as Thales, Anaximander and Anaximenes; adventurers and historians such as Scylax, Hecataeus and Herodotus were all from this region. The Ionian island of Samos, which was probably the birth place of both Pythagoras and Aesop, was an important commercial trade centre. Aesop probably lived as a slave and slave status in Greece normally indicated a non-Greek origin. The non-Greek origin of the supposed author of Greek fables may also support the theory of external impact on Greek fables.

Greek Impact on Indian Legends

Several outstanding epic and Puranic legends of India probably emanated from Greece and were assimilated into the corpus of Indian mythology prior to the advent of Alexander. The Greek epics, the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, provide a fairly reliable, if exaggerated, picture of the Greek heroic age, whereas ancient Indian texts project only a hazy vision of the Vedic people. Interestingly, sometime between the eighth and sixth century B.C., the literature of both civilisations begins to reveal a number of themes that were affiliated with the Greek epic poems but were unknown to the early Aryans. This would indicate an ethnic exchange and would account for the differences between Vedic and post-Vedic mythologies.

Greek influence in India was in evidence mainly after the invasion of the Graeco-Bactrian kings. Apollodorus of Artemitta as quoted by Strabo informs us that Greeks from Bactria became masters not only of Ariana, but also of India. These kings, in particular Demetrius (200-185 B.C.) and Menander (155-130 B.C.), conquered more Indian tribes than any of the Greek successors of Alexander.[15] The Indian sources of the *Yuga Purana*, Patanjali's *Mahabhashya* and *Malavikagnimitra*[20] also attest this invasion of the *Yavanas*. The Greeks did not remain long as foreigners; soon, they were assimilated by the Indian population. Menander appears to have lavishly patronised the Buddhist faith. References to this appear in the Buddhist text, the *Milinda Panha*, which describes an argument in the form of dialogues between Milinda (Menander) and a Buddhist monk Nagasena, by whom the king was allegedly converted.

It would be natural to assume that, after their settlement in India, the Greeks influenced various aspects of Indian culture. Several references to them in Indian epic and Puranic literature bear testimony to the fact that the *Puranas* as well as the composition of some parts of the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* took place after the invasion and settlement of the Greeks on Indian territory. The *Puranas* refer to some eight Indo-Greek kings. More prominently mentioned among them is Kalayavana, who may have been as powerful an Indo-Greek ruler as Demetrius or Menander. Dattamitra of the *Mahabharata* has been identified as Demetrius.[16] Similarly, the description of Nakula's conquest over the Vatadhana Brahmanas has also been interpreted as the conquest of Demetrius.[17]

In the *Greek Epic of India* Hopkins endeavours to establish that the *Mahabharata*, in its present literary form, was written only after Greek words and wisdom had become familiar to Indian philosophers and poets. Referring to a passage in the *Mahabharata*, Hopkins writes:

> "... the fact that the 'Greeks', who must here be the real Greeks, bear the name *Yavanas*, shows that the *Yavanas* elsewhere mentioned are also Greeks and not some other people exclusively .... A further well-known indication of Greek influence is given by the fact that the Kaudrakas and Malavas were united into one nation for the first time

4 Relief
Possibly from Charsadda
Stone

by the invasion of Alexander, and that they appear thus united under the combined name Ksudrakamalavas in the Epic, II, 52, 15. Further, the distinct prophecy that 'Scythians, Greeks and Bactrians will rule unrighteously in the evil age to come' (*kali*-age), which occurs in III, 188, 35 is too clear a statement to be ignored or explained away. When this was written the peoples mentioned had already ruled Hindustan . . . in III, 51, 23, 'Singhalese, Barabas and barbarians, and the inhabitants of Lanka' are grouped together, in contrast to the 'western realms, those of the Persians, Greeks, and Scythians' (with the folk of Kashmeer, Daradas, Kiratas, Huns, Chinese, Tusaras, Indus-dwellers, etc.). So in XII, 207, 43 opposed to sinners in the South, are the Northern sinners, Greeks (*Yavanas*), Kambojans, Kandahar-people (Gandharas), Kiratas and Barabas, who are here said to be wandering over this earth from the time of *Treta* age, having customs like those of wild animals or of the lowest castes. Such allusions as these can mean only this: the Pandu-Epic, in its present form was composed after the Greek invasion."[18]

The *Ramayana* is generally believed to have taken its present form *c.* A.D. 200. In it we read that when Vishvamitra tried to abduct Kamadhenu, "Shaka, Pahlava, Yavana and others" participated in the battle between Vasistha and Vishvamitra. One opinion is that since the practice of using signet rings was first introduced in India by the Indo-Greeks, the story of Rama entrusting his signet ring to Hanuman who is deputed to go in search of Sita, could have been developed only after the settlement of the Indo-Greeks.[19] Likewise, the themes of golden Lanka and the feast of wine, women and meat hosted by the sage Bharadvaja were probably introduced only after trade with the Roman world began to flourish.[20]

Various Classical authorities furnish evidence to support the claim that some Indians were indeed remarkably well-acquainted with Greek language and literature. According to Philostratos (A.D. 170-246), an Indian village where all the inhabitants spoke Greek, was visited by Apollonius of Tyana. An Indian king, Pharaotes (Gondophernes?) conversed with Apollonius in Greek and informed him that he had read Euripides' *Herakleidai.*[21] Furthermore, Nicolaus Damascaenus reveals that the ambassadors sent to Augustus by the Indian king, Poros, in 22 B.C. carried with them a letter written in Greek.[22] Plutarch (A.D. 48-122) writes that during the reign of the Parthian king, Orodes I, the drama *Bacchae* was staged (53 B.C.) and also informs us that the tragedies of Euripides and Soplocles were played by the Gedrosians. Dio-Chrysostom (A.D. 40-115) stated that the Indians had Homer translated in their own language.[23] A similar statement was made also by Aelian (A.D. 170-235).[24]

Between the epic and Puranic literature there are several striking parallels among Greek and Indian legends. Correlations occur, for instance, between the legends of Shantanu-Ganga and Peleus-Thetis; Urvasi-Pururavas and Eros-Psyche; Indra-Ahalya and Zeus-Deo; Ruru-Pramadvara and Alcestis-Admetus; Kamsa-Krishna and Cronos-Zeus; Sikhandin's 'change of sex' and



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5a



5b

5a Coin of Agies I (obverse) showing king on horseback
c. 57-35 BC, Indo-Scythian
Silver
Private Collection
Photo, Sharad Madan

5b Coin of Agies I (reverse) showing city goddess holding an object resembling a brazier in her right hand, and a branch of palm bound with fillet in her left
c. 57-35 BC, Indo-Scythian
Silver
Private Collection
Photo, Sharad Madan

6 The death of Adonis
1st century AD, Gandhara, reportedly from Sirkap
Green steatite, d. 10.1 cm
Collection: The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kunsas City, Missouri (Nelson Fund)
Courtesy, The Cleveland Museum of Art

Iphis' 'change of sex'; the mantic sharp sight of Nala's companion, Rituparna and Calchas' contestant Mopsus; the birth of the Bhrugu race from the thigh of Sage Aurva and Dionysius' birth; the vulnerable heels of Krishna and Achilles; Draupadi's *svayamvara* and Penelope's suitors; *Maya*/Sita and *Eidolon*/Helen; and so on.[25] In most of these cases, the formats of the tales are essentially the same. For example, sequences such as the marriage between a mortal king and a water-goddess, the taboo of silence involved in the union, the return of the water-goddess to her natural form when the taboo is broken, and the attempt to immortalise the sons or make them invulnerable, occur in the same chronology in the *Mahabharata* story of Ganga-Shantanu and the legend of Peleus-Thetis. The literary device of *Eidolon's* (Helen's shadow) abduction by Paris was later introduced to the original story. Similarly, some of the *Puranas* later introduced the abduction of *Maya* (Sita) to the original version. These resemblances are so remarkable that the theory of Hellenistic influence after Greek settlement in India is highly probable.

Among the Greek legends which have surfaced in secular Indian texts is that of the Trojan horse which metamorphoses into an elephant in the Indian version. The Indian myth states that the king of Ujjain commissioned a hollow wooden elephant and filled it with soldiers. When Udayana, the king of the Vatsa kingdom, attempted to charm the elephant with his lyre, the sides fell open, the warriors emerged *en masse* and captured the unwary prince.[26] The episode of Vijaya in the Ceylonese text, *Mahavamsa,* comprises a sequence of events which is reminiscent of the tale of Odysseus on the island of Circe.[27]

Archaeological evidence is another factor which confirms the belief that Greek legends had become a part of cultural expression in certain regions of India by the early centuries of the Christian Era. The coins of Indo-Greek rulers unearthed from Indian soil depict Zeus, Heracles, Pallas Athene and other deities from Greek mythology. Until the second century, the Kushanas portrayed Hellenic deities such as Zeus, Heracles and Helios along with Hindu and various Iranian and Brahmanical gods on their coins. Minor Buddhist deities were occasionally represented in various Greek forms, including those of satyrs and centaurs, and they appear as decorative motifs



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on the stupas and chapels of Gandhara. Beneath the statue of a meditating Buddha is a procession of garland-bearing Cupids from a scene of a Dionysiac orgy.[28] In Gandhara art, Buddhist deities frequently assumed the semblance of Greek gods. Zeus was transformed into Vajrapani; Atlas became a *Yaksha;* Nike was translated into an Indian female spirit celebrating the birth of the Buddha; and Demeter, the Earth-Mother of the Greeks, was converted into Hariti.[29] The Trojan horse motif emerges again in a stone relief discovered in the vicinity of Peshawar. A fragment of a vase unearthed near Peshawar depicts a scene from Sophocles' *Antigone* in which Haemon begs Creon for the life of his beloved.[30]

In the past, the general inclination of European historians has been to exaggerate the effects of Greek culture on India. The most extreme exponent of this view was Niese, who believed that the entire development of India was based on the institutions established by the Greeks after Alexander's invasion.[31] While we may reject this hyperbolic view as a manifestation of European prejudice, there should be no hesitation in acknowledging that certain Greek themes found their way into Indian literature.

West Asian or Egyptian Origin

The traditions of West Asia and Egypt reveal the earliest versions of certain mythological parallels. Common themes such as 'Child Exposure', 'Survival in Water' and 'Deluge' occur first in Babylonia.

The exposure of the child is one of the identifying marks of the true hero or heroine. Abandonment is necessary because the protogonist must be proved capable of surviving against all odds. The cause of the exposure may vary : illegitimacy, deformity, incestuous parentage, and so forth. Whatever the reason, the life of the heroic figure assumes a formulaic quality : the child is inevitably saved, grows to beauty and stature and fulfills a prophecy.

Many Indian epic heroes were abandoned after their births : Krishna was brought up by a cowherd, Satyavati left her child on an island, Menaka deserted Shakuntala in the forest. Similar instances occur in Greek mythology : Zeus was forsaken y his mother and taken to Crete. The illegitimate Telephus survived exposure twice nd was event ally adopted by Teuthras, King of Mysia. Atlanta suffered exposure because her father wanted a son; she was nursed by a she-bear. Cadmus had his grandchild, Dionysius, cast adrift in the sea.

'Deluge' myths generally project the sin and wickedness of the contemporary generation as the cause of the Cataclysm. In India, the 'Deluge' is a necessary event; it moves the cycle of creation. This concept is illustrated by *Kaliyug*. The Greeks also entertained the belief that the flood represented divine visitation on human depravity : in the *Iliad*, Homer describes the 'Deluge' as a result of Zeus' anger at men for their perversion of justice.[32] Thus, the 'Deluge' is generally portrayed in myth as a purifying experience.

In Egypt and Babylonia we find the earliest examples of themes such as the 'Cosmic Egg'. In India, the Rigvedic concept of *hiranya-garbha*, emanating from primeval water, later developed into the world-egg motif in Brahmanic literature. In Greece, the Pelasgian creation myth says that Eurynome, the Goddess of all things, assumed the form of a dove and, brooding on the waves of the sea, laid the universal egg. The theme of the 'Inexhaustible Food Supply' appears initially among the Cannanites. Some animal fables may also have their origin in West Asia or Egypt, for the fables were known in Sumer even in the third millennium B.C., and were current in Egypt between 1580-1130 B.C.[33] Thus, since West Asia, the territory between India and Greece, reveals the earliest available versions of certain legends, it is quite possible that this region served as the source location for several Greek and Indian themes.

Nevertheless, while parallels are readily visible on the surface, the perspectives of East and West are virtually in diametric opposition. In contrast to the Hellenic sages whose reading of the Cosmos commenced with the visible and then extended to space, Indian sages based their cosmology on space, evoking a Universe inconceivable in the West; the Indian concept of 'Cosmos' is permeated with an infinite sorrow for the endless cyclic striving of the soul.

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THE EPHEMERAL AND THE IMMORTAL

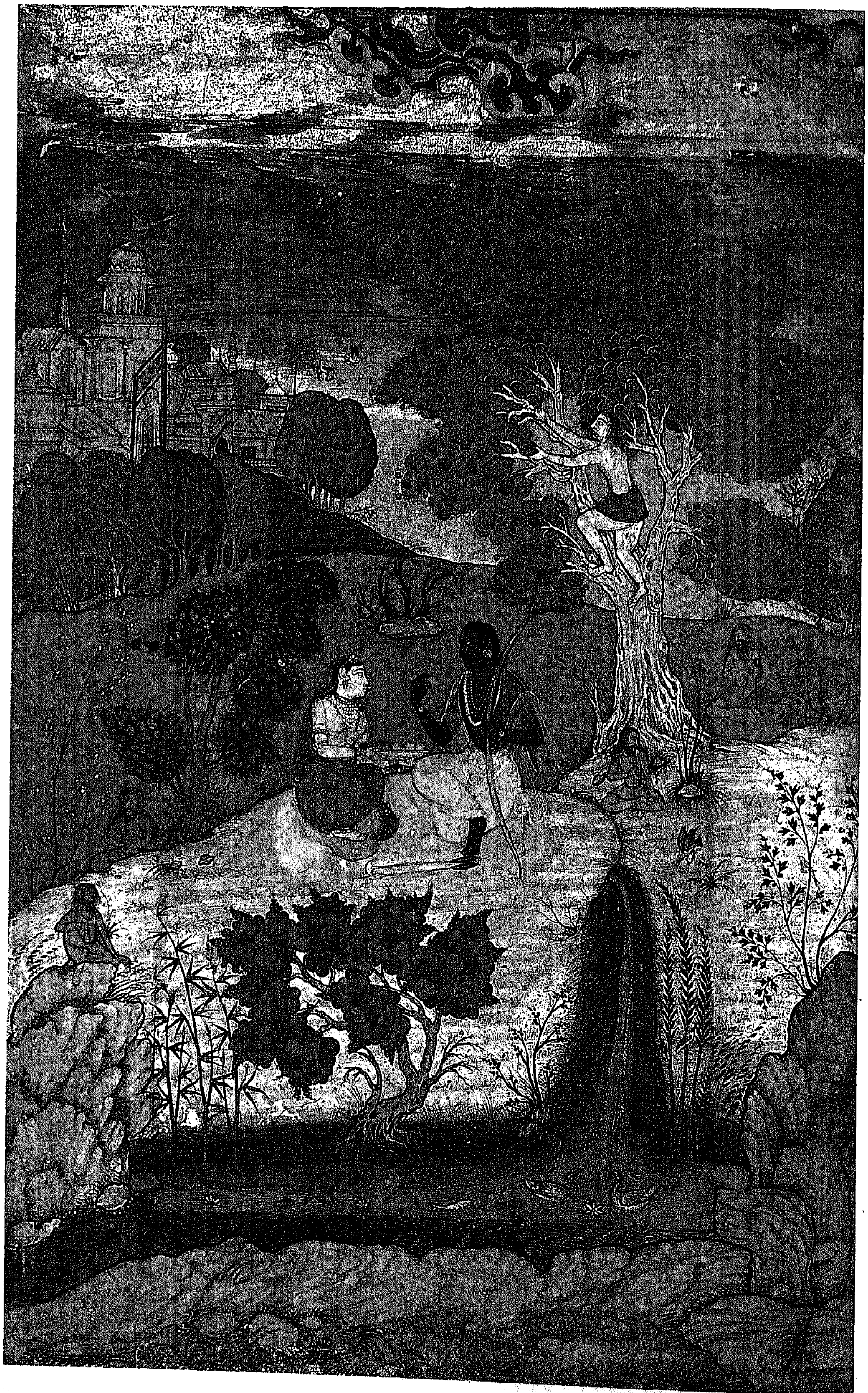
Ralph Strohl

The hero (Greek "hero," cognate with Sanskrit veera) is a literary type of common currency among the literatures within the Indo-European linguistic group.



1

LITERATURE



2

1 **Fourteen lucky dreams (*Kalpasutra*)**
18th century A.D., Rajasthan
Private Collection
Photo, Saryu Doshi

2 **An illustration from the *Ramayana***
c. A.D. 1600, Mughal School, sub-Imperial Style
Paper
Collection & Courtesy, National Museum, New Delhi

The typical literary form in which the hero appears is the epic, or texts—parts of which imitate epic style as in the *Puranas.*

The classical discussion of the hero in Western scholarship is *Gli Eroi Greci,* by the Italian historian of religions, Angelo Brelich. His comprehensive morphological study of the hero is, as his title implies, based strictly upon Greek materials. While other Western scholars have given passing notice to Teutonic, Roman, Persian and Indian heroic figures, the concept of the Greek hero continues to serve as the paradigm on which all their typological efforts are based.

Brelich's study of Greek heroes stresses the following aspects of the heroic character. Heroes are superhuman, yet not divine, intermediate figures between the gods and mankind. This intermediary status is highlighted by their mixed parentage, often involving a mortal father and divine mother. Their time of activity is the beginning of the human world, before human history but after cosmogony; that is, between mythical and historical time. Heroes are associated with particular modes of creative activity, such as moulding landscapes, forming human institutions, and especially instituting athletic contests. They are associated with adolescent initiation rites; indeed, their adventures may be interpreted as transpositions of such rites into a narrative format. They are associated with mysteries. The most noteworthy feature of heroes, however, is the violent manner of their death—almost no Greek heroes die naturally. This death is understood to be a reasonable conclusion to a life which is by no means exemplary. Brelich suggests a correlation between monstrosities of behaviour and physical monstrosities (excessive height, blindness, a hunched back) by which heroes are afflicted. The hero's death also has a creative quality attending it; the figure of legend becomes the focus of cultic activity. The dead hero, or the site of his entombment, was apparently considered to be the focus of a continuing protective power efficacious within a limited radius (compare the worship of hero stones in Tamil Nadu and other parts of south India). Furthermore, the story of the life and extraordinary death of the hero addresses the issue of a mortal's fate or destiny, a theme of great concern to the more mundane humanity whose own "hour upon the stage" immediately follows the heroes' demise. While the dead heroes attain, to cite Mircea Eliade, "an immortality of a spiritual order... conferred by *glory,* the perpetuity of their name," and thus serve as a "paradigmatic model for all those who desire to exceed the ephemeral condition of the mortal, to save their names from final oblivion, to survive in the memory of men," they are denied the full immortality and efficacy of the Olympian gods.

Other scholars (Lord Raglan, Jan de Vries and Otto Rank) have noted additional elements of the structure of the story of the Greek hero that recur in important ways. For example:

1) the hero's extraordinary conception and birth is often attended by extraordinary astral or atmospheric phenomena;
2) the relationship between the hero and his father, who is a king, is a crucial element of the story and is, in the Greek literature, generally an adversarial one;
3) the hero is raised in obscurity and low estate after having been abandoned by his parents, often after his attempted murder by his father;
4) at adulthood he comes into possession of the throne (perhaps, like Oedipus, by the slaying of his father), and has to fight back challenges to his occupancy of it;
5) he is driven from his kingdom into the wilderness, where
6) he meets a violent death.

A noteworthy conception governing such a plot structure is the alternating contexts of court (or society or culture) and wilderness. The hero is always under threat of being forced into the wilderness, and always struggling to maintain his proper position at the pinnacle of society—on the throne. Themes of chaos and order and their struggle for ascendancy in the affairs of humankind lurk behind this wilderness-society polarity.

In the Indian religious context, there exist many legends of heroic figures



3

3 Seated Bodhisattva
1st century A.D., Gandhara, Near Hoti Mardan
Schist, h. 55.88 cm
Collection & Courtesy, The Ashmolean Museum, Oxford

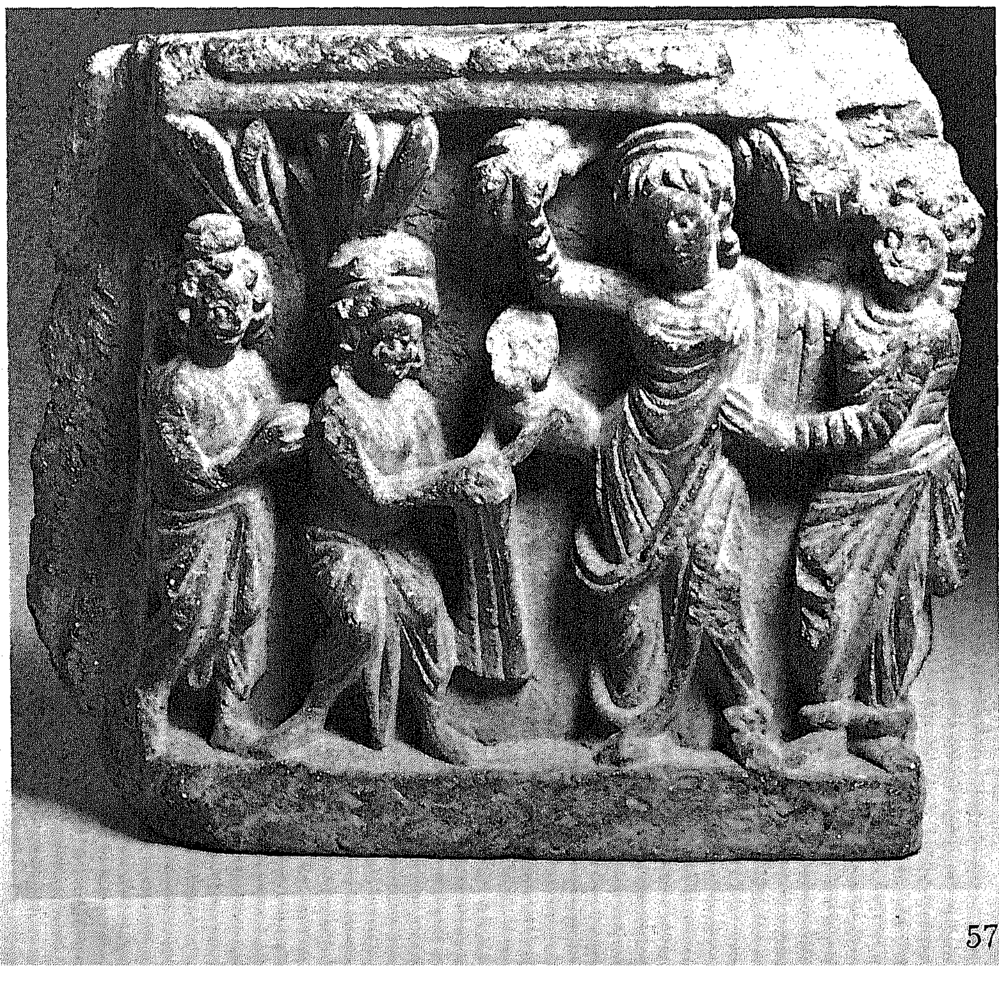
4 Birth of Buddha
4th century A.D., Gandhara
Stone, h. 13.5 cm
Collection of Scherman, formerly collection of Roose-Keppel
Courtesy, Staatliches Museum fur Volkerkunde, Munich

in which the thematic elements described above appear. The Indian context provides an excellent milieu for the study of the heroic figure, for there are available in that situation not only the stories proper, but also many details of the religious context in which these stories occur, and in which they have their efficacy. Therefore, scholars are able to study Indian religious heroes, not simply as literary phenomena, but also as living religious phenomena with significance in the ritual and social spheres.

The legends of heroes in Indian religions, in order to clearly articulate the religious values of the traditions in which they occur, involve selection and alterations of the thematic elements from the pattern outlined for Greek heroes; yet, those elements remain crucial to the framing of the heroic story in India, as well. For example, the births of heroes will sometimes be attended by unusual phenomena (that of Gautama Buddha's by prophecy, that of a Jain *Tirthankara* by his mother's dreams), but the birth itself will reflect elements distinctive to Indian religiosity – the hero as a human incarnation of a god (Rama as an *avatara* of Vishnu), or as a figure who attains his birth as a consequence of his *karma* in prior lives (a Jina or Buddha). Thus, the effect achieved by a combined divine-human parentage with respect to Greek heroes is attained in the Indian context in ways consonant with its own cosmological and theological conceptions.

The father-son relationship is very important in these stories, and may have an adversarial quality to it (Vedic Indra may have slain his father; Gautama Buddha forsakes the crown for mendicancy over his father's objections), but frequently does not (Rama goes into exile in obedience to his father's command; the Jain *Tirthankara* Rishabha, in a twist on the Greek pattern, abandons his sons and himself goes to the forest, eventually to be joined by them in mendicancy). Such variations have specific religious importance and are meant to convey certain religious truths.

This fact becomes clearer in examining the variety of ways in which the imagery of wilderness and society is treated in Indian heroic stories. The interaction between the father and the son is usually the heroic narrative's means of determining the hero's locale at any point of the story. For the mendicant fighting his battle against the forces of *karma* through *yoga* or *tapas*, the wilderness is not only the proper locale for his warfare, but



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also his proper abode after his victory. Yet, mendicant activity in the wilderness may take differing forms. The Buddha founds a new society, the *samgha* of *bhikkus,* separate from, but having regular ritual interactions with, mundane human society. The Jain mendicant, on the other hand, in what appears to be a more truly heroic mode, undertakes the gradual separation of himself from all human society, culminating in his self-imposed and freely undertaken death by starvation in the presence of a single attendant. In the Jain case, the complete separation of the individual from society, which is one prominent Western definition of tragedy, is the occasion for a human being's achievement of his religious goal, the finding of his pure self, permanently free from the bonds of birth, death and rebirth. In contrast to both of these mendicant examples, Rama and the *Pandavas,* more in accord with the Greek pattern, endure their exile (itself a type of yogic activity) and fight their battles in the wilderness with the aim of securing their restoration to the pinnacle of society as rulers, which is understood as their proper place, the place where they must be for *dharma* to take firm root in the world and for peace and harmony (*shanti*) to be established. Interestingly, in one instance, the hero's proper locale is deemed to be firmly within the social network; in another completely separate from it; and in a third, in a special religious society separate from, but having regular relations with, society at large. All these are significant in terms of conceptions of religious anthropology, ethics and eschatology.

The hero's virtues and vices are also prominent, and again appear in differing ways, conveying different religious perspectives. For example, the *Pandavas'* seemingly unvirtuous actions *vis à vis* the marshals of the Kaurava army, aimed at securing Yudhisthira, the son of Dharma, on the throne, form a statement about the tortuous relationship between individual and universal *dharma* in the Kali age. The Jain mendicant's behaviour, by contrast, represents the quest to establish in himself all the virtues in their purest form and the eradication of all vices. This conduct is described as a martial conflict with the senses, passions and forces of *karma.* The stress in this instance is on the importance of the struggle to secure the purity of *dharma* in one's own thought, belief and conduct, unrelated in any significant way to a universal concept of *dharma.* These perorations on virtue and vice often employ the concept of *lakshanas,* or exterior marks, reflective of the inner state of the hero. The *lakshanas* are reminiscent of the Greek literary device of pairing ethical monstrosities with physical deformities, but tend, instead, to reflect the hero's purity, rather than his darker side. Furthermore, the *lakshanas* are rooted specifically in Indian aesthetics.

In common with heroic stories in other cultural settings, the heroic stories that occur in the context of the various religious expressions in India address the issue of destiny – both of the individual and the cosmos – directly. In the Hindu epics, the destiny of the individual and that of the universe are integrally related, whereas in the Buddhist and Jain traditions, the focus is more on the destiny of the individual proper, expressed in terms of *nirvana* or *moksha.* It should be noted that Indian heroes, through their striving, generally achieve the fulfillment of their destiny, even at the cost of bodily life. Indeed, the death of the body (which may introduce sacrificial overtones into the hero's story), which may or may not be violent, is always understood to occur "in the fullness of time," and is usually seen as a point of transition from an impermanent, ephemeral condition to a permanent, immortal one, and therefore not as the end of life, but, rather, as its true beginning. Thus, Indian heroes' ends have a much more optimistic aspect than do the Greek heroes'. The Greek hero's life and actions are clouded over by the shadow of impending death, and thus convey a darker vision better captured by the term "fate" than "destiny." Thus, he strives to salvage what he can from this situation, the glory and perpetuity of his name. The Indian hero goes beyond that to achieve his proper, enduring position in relation to *karma* and *dharma* through his struggle and achieves true immortality, or "salvation," again variously conceived in the Indian religious context.



Coin of Hermaues (c. 40-1 B.C. or later): reverse
Courtesy, Shri Shukla, Photo, Sharad Madan

TRADITIONS

TRADITIONS

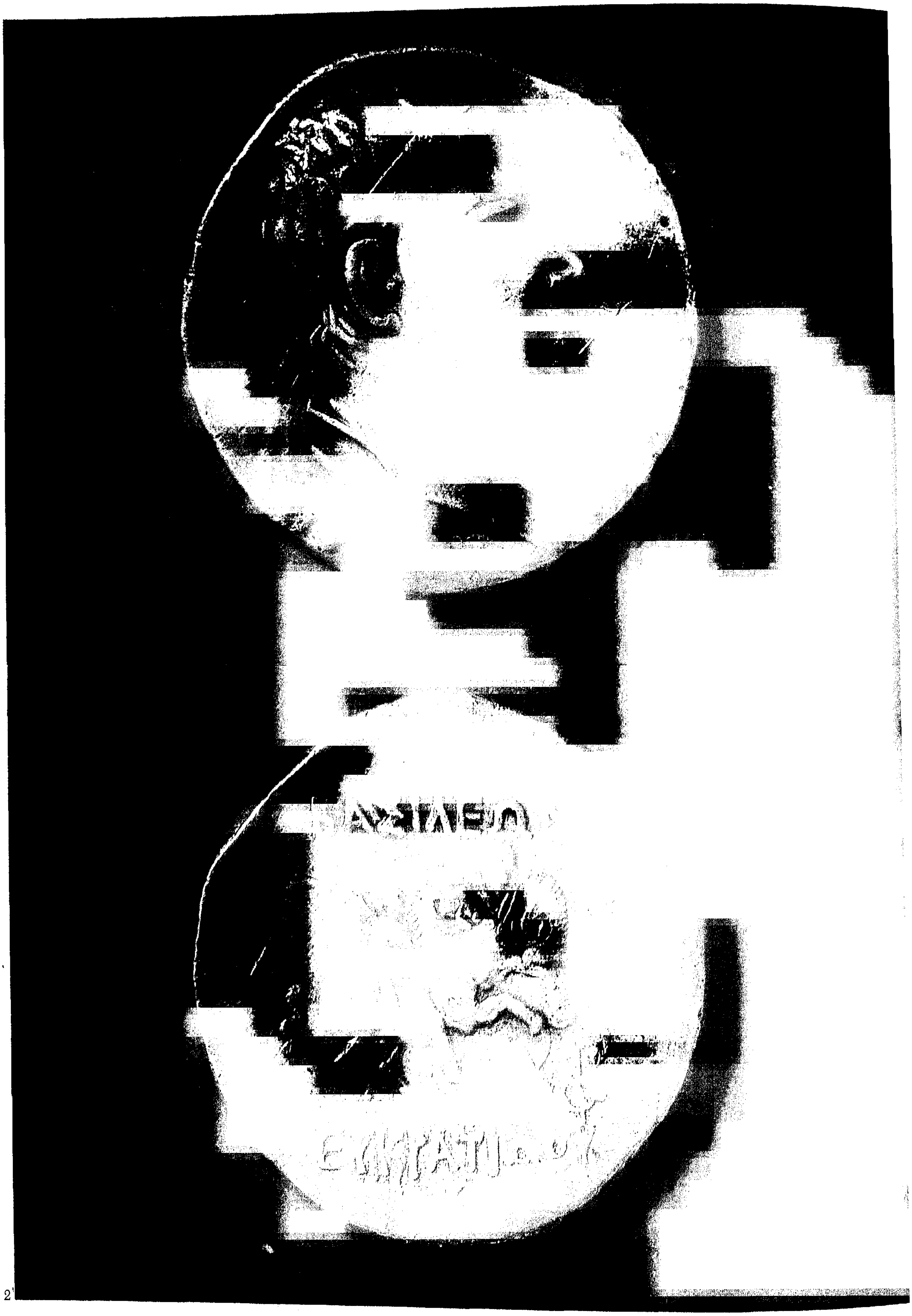
THE EMBLEMS OF EMPIRE

R. Vanaja

The coinage of the Indo-Greeks marks a significant phase in the history of Indian coins and currency systems.



1



1 **Demetrius (obverse: bust of king; reverse: Athena with shield and spear)**
Greek legend: "Basileos Demetriou"
190-171 BC
Silver
Courtesy, National Museum, New Delhi

2 **Eucratides (obverse: bust of the ruler; reverse: "Dioscuri" charging)**
Greek legend: "Basileos Megalou"
171-135 BC
Courtesy, National Museum, New Delhi

These coins belong to the second-first centuries B.C. and, in terms of chronology, are later than the punch-marked coins in silver and copper and the cast copper coins. Being dynastic issues of a foreign ruling family, the Indo-Greek coins represent a major departure from the earlier punch-marked and cast coins which were issued mainly by corporate merchant bodies from the sixth century B.C. As the earliest dynastic issues, the Indo-Greek coins directly influenced the coin traditions of India for the next six centuries, particularly those of the Kushanas and the Guptas.

The fusion of the two cultural streams—the Greek and the Indian—are reflected in the fabric, legends and symbols of the Indo-Greek coins. These issues ushered a new trend which dominated the coinages of all the 'foreign' dynasties that ruled in India between the first century B.C. and fourth century A.D. The Indo-Greek coinage is extremely important in the history of Indian numismatics as it provides a rare instance of coins representing the main source of historical reconstruction. For, were it not for their coins, the Indo-Greeks would have remained largely unknown to history.

The Bactrian Kingdom

The Indo-Greeks were one of the successive lines of foreign rulers, who entered India in the wake of the Macedonian invasion under Alexander in the fourth century B.C. and the establishment of Greek rule in Bactria in the third century B.C. A highly organised militaristic state, Macedon, in northern Greece, became dominant among the Greeks in the fourth century B.C. and was instrumental in spreading Greek culture through Egypt, the Near East and all the way to India. The Hellenistic era, distinguished from the earlier Hellenic era, was initiated with the blending of Hellenic elements with Oriental concepts. It left its mark on coinage; particularly that of Bactria. This region, conquered by Alexander the Great (336-323 B.C.), subsequently came under the sway of the Seleucid Greek kings of Syria. Around 250 B.C. Diodotos I, a local ruler of Bactria (256-239 B.C.), revolted against the Seleucid ruler Antiochus II and set up an independent kingdom which struck its own coins. The Diodotii (Diodotos I and his son Diodotos II) laid the foundation of the Graeco-Bactrian kingdom. But the growth and the consolidation of its power in the east-northern Pakistan or the north-western region of ancient India—was largely due to the achievements of the Bactrian princes Euthydemos I (230-190 B.C.) and his *Fig. 3*
son Demetrius I (190-171 B.C.). Demetrius expanded his kingdom by *Fig. 1*
annexing areas south of the Hindu Kush. His exploits in India surpassed even those of Alexander. While Demetrius was busy with his Indian conquests, Eucratides—a rival prince in Bactria—wrested the dominions *Fig. 2*
belonging to the family of Euthydemos. Eucratides (171-135 B.C.), who established his supremacy over the Kabul valley—the Paropamisadae of the Western Classical sources—Balkh and parts of north-western India (present Pakistan). By *c.* 175 B.C. branches of these two families of Bactrian Greeks were established in India. Eventually, they came to be known as Indo-Greeks and they ruled over north-western India. This region, especially that of Ancient Gandhara (Taxila and Peshawar area), by virtue of its strategic location commanded entry into India from Seleucid West Asia, Central Asia and China in the Far East.

Taxila, situated in the Sind Sagar Doab between the Indus and the Jhelum rivers, was the focal point of the ancient Indian trade routes. One of them was the eastern highway, described by Megasthenes as the "royal highway," from Patna to the north-west of the Mauryan empire; the second passed through Begram and Pushkalavati across the Indus at Ohind to Taxila; and the third connected Central Asia by way of Kashmir to Taxila. These trade routes carried the bulk of the traffic passing by land between India and Central and Western Asia and played an important part in ancient trade.

In the wake of Alexander's invasion, trade between the West and India intensified and there was an outburst of prosperity in Seleucia (Syria) during the third-second centuries B.C. The Bactrian Greeks and the Indo-Greeks recognised the significance of trade with the Seleucids and were interested in exercising a fair degree of control over this trade. From the



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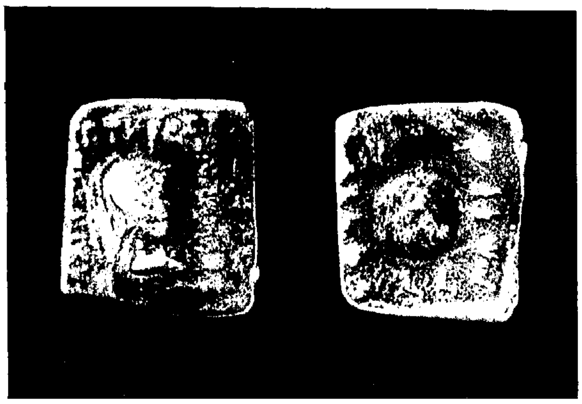
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3 Euthydemos (obverse: bust of king; reverse: prancing horse)
Greek legend: "Basileos Euthydemou;" 230-190 BC
Copper
Courtesy, National Museum, New Delhi

4 Antimachos (obverse: winged 'Nike'; reverse: king on horseback)
Greek legend: obverse: "Basileos Nikephorou Antimachou;" Kharoshthi legend: reverse: "Maharajasa Jayadharasa Amtimakhasa;" 171-160 BC
Silver
Courtesy, National Museum, New Delhi

5 Archebios (obverse: elephant to right; reverse: 'owl')
Greek legend: obverse: "Basileos Dikaiou Nikephorou Archebiou;" Kharoshthi legend: reverse: "Maharajasa Dhramikasa Jayadharasa Arkhebiyasa;" 80-60 BC
Bronze
Courtesy, National Museum, New Delhi

6 Agathocles (obverse: Balarama—Samkarshana holding the plough and the pestle; reverse: 'Vasudeva' with the Wheel)
Greek legend: obverse: "Basileos Agathucleo(u)s;" Brahmi legend: reverse: "Agathukreyasa;" 171-160 BC
Bronze
Courtesy, French Archaeological Mission, Ai-Khanoum Excavations

7 Menander (obverse: helmeted bust of Pallas Athena; reverse: shield with Gorgon head in centre)
Greek legend: obverse: "Basileos Soteros Menandrou;" Kharoshthi legend: reverse: "Maharajasa Tratarasa Menadrasa;" 160-145 BC
Copper
Courtesy, National Museum, New Delhi

8 Apollodotos I (obverse: elephant standing right; reverse: bull standing right)
Greek legend: obverse: "Basileos Apollodotou Soteros;" Kharoshthi legend: reverse: "Maharajasa Apaladatesa Tratarasa;" 160-150 BC
Silver
Courtesy, National Museum, New Delhi

9 Epander (obverse: bust of king, diademed; reverse: helmeted Athena standing to left holding 'aegis' in outstretched left arm and hurling thunderbolt with right)
Greek legend: obverse: "Basileos Nikephorou Epandrou;" Kharoshthi legend: reverse: "Maharajasa Jayadharasa Epadrasa;" 135-130 BC
Silver
Courtesy, National Museum, New Delhi



10 Epander (obverse: winged 'Nike' with palm and wreath; reverse: humped bull)
Greek legend: obverse: "Basileos Nikephorou Epandrou;"
Kharoshthi legend: reverse: "Maharajasa Jayadharasa Epadrasa;" 135-130 BC
Copper
Courtesy, National Museum, New Delhi

11 Philoxenos (obverse: diademed bust of king to right; reverse: king on horseback)
Greek legend: obverse: "Basileos Aniketou Philoxenou;" Kharoshthi legend: reverse: "Maharajasa Apadihatasa Philasinasa;" 110-80 BC
Silver
Courtesy, National Museum, New Delhi

12 Philoxenos (obverse: 'Tyche' standing left, holding cornucopiae in left arm, right hand outstretched; reverse: humped bull)
Greek legend: obverse: "Basileos Aniketou Philoxenou;" Kharoshthi legend: reverse: "Maharajasa Apadihatasa Philasinasa;" 110-80 BC
Copper
Courtesy, National Museum, New Delhi

13 Nicias (obverse: helmeted bust of king; reverse: Pallas standing, holding shield and thunderbolt)
Greek legend: obverse: "Basileos Soteros Nicia(s);" Kharoshthi legend: reverse: "Maharaja Tratarasa Nikiasa;" 80-60 BC
Silver
Courtesy, National Museum, New Delhi

14 Hippostratos (obverse: Triton holding dolphin and rudder; reverse: city goddess standing left wearing mural crown holding palm)
Greek legend: obverse: "Basileos Soteros (H)ippostratou;" Kharoshthi legend: reverse: "Maharajasa Tratarasa Hipustratasa;" 80-60 BC
Copper
Courtesy, National Museum, New Delhi


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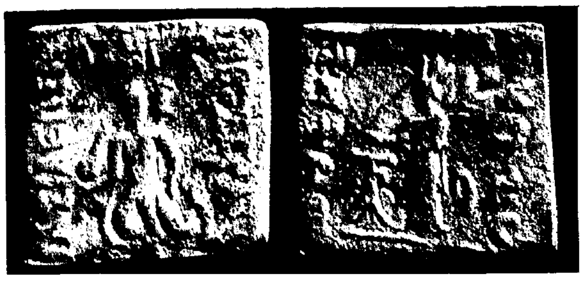

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middle of the third century B.C., the history of the Bactrian Greeks was a conflict between two rival houses—that of Euthydemos and Eucratides—as each tried to gain possession of these strategic regions. By the first quarter of the second century B.C., branches of these two royal houses of Bactrian Greeks—known as *Yavanas* in India—were established in different parts of India. To these two rival houses belong the forty kings, princes and queens of the second-first century B.C. ruling in territories north and south of the Hindu Kush in Gandhara, Punjab and Jammu areas. Some of them reigned contemporaneously and were mutually hostile to each other. Of these monarchs, we know merely their names and the regions they controlled through their coin issues.

The Seleucids employed a system of joint rulership or delegation of authority, the father controlling the mainland while the son ruled in the eastern provinces. But the Bactrian king, Euthydemos, introduced a new policy in which a younger son might rule a part of the realm not as a joint king or a Satrap but as a sub-king with the right of issuing coins. This serves to explain the numismatic puzzle of coin issues of a number of kings in the early period. This Bactrian tradition persisted even in the Indo-Greek realm where a minor son, and at times a military commander, was raised to the status of an associate king. To cite an example, the Indo-Greek ruler Eucratides elevated Apollodotos I (160-150 B.C.) and Menander (160-145 B.C.), two of his successful military commanders, to the post of associates. Often coins were minted for paying the troops or hiring mercenaries. And since many of the Greek settlements in India were garrisoned cities, it is not unlikely that military commanders were granted the authority to issue coinage, for the garrisons in their region.

Indo-Greek Coins

Bactrian Greek and Indo-Greek coins have been found along with punch-marked coins and Scytho-Parthian coins in northern Afghanistan. The major finds of the Indo-Greek coins to the west and east of the Indus are those of the Qunduz, Mir Zakah and Ai-Khanoum hoards (all in Afghanistan), the Shai Khano Dheri hoard near Charsadda. Indo-Greek coins were also discovered in ancient Pushkalavati or Peukalaotis in the Swat valley (an important city in Gandhara), the two Bajaur hoards, the Taxila excavations, as well as in the Jammu and Sialkot regions. Indo-Greek coin hoards found in Saharanpur and Sonipat contain coins of rulers who came after Menander (160-145 B.C.) whose kingdoms must have been situated farther west than the regions where they were discovered.

Indo-Greek coin types are remarkable for their great variety and originality. Like the Seleucids of Syria, the early Bactrians attempted to introduce Hellenistic culture in the regions over which they ruled. The

15



15 Hermaios (obverse: diademed bust of king; reverse: enthroned Zeus holding sceptre)
Greek legend: obverse: "Basileos Soteros Ermaiou;" Kharoshthi legend: reverse: "Maharajasa Tratarasa Hermayasa"
40-1 BC
Silver
Courtesy, National Museum, New Delhi

Bactrians were, moreover, receptive to the pluralistic nature of Indian culture. Hence their coinage exhibits an attempt at syncretism in such aspects as the choice of motifs and their mode of portrayal. The splendid portrait series of coins, mostly in silver and less frequently in copper, depicts the ruler on the obverse with a seated deity, Greek or Indian, on the reverse.

Portrait Coins

The Greeks of the Classical era did not depict living persons on their coins. Even Alexander's coins did not carry his portrait: they portrayed the figure of young Heracles with Zeus enthroned, holding an eagle and a sceptre on the reverse. Actually, it is the Egyptian ruler, Ptolemy I (323-285 B.C.), a Macedonian by birth, who introduced the head of Alexander on his coins, deifying the latter and thus following a long-standing Egyptian belief that the Pharaoh was divine. Subsequently, he replaced Alexander's portrait with his own portrait and name. This practice spread widely and soon became a popular method of minting coins during the Hellenistic period.

The most remarkable among these series of coins are the portrait coins that come from the remote kingdom of Bactria which had ateliers and competent artists who were probably of Greek origin. An innovation of these artists was human portraiture which reproduced the distinctive features of the individual in an attempt at realism, rarely encountered in Indian art. The portrait of the royal personage, or that of a military commander, was perhaps intended to identify the issuing authority. Generally, the face in profile adorns the obverse of these coins and the reverse shows either a deity or an animal. The images of ancient gods and goddesses, drawn mostly from Greek mythology and as represented on the Indo-Greek coins, lack the beauty of Classical Greek art. And yet, it is undeniable, that these figures enhanced the aesthetic value of the coins. The images of the Indo-Greek rulers, by contrast, appear more vigorous and vital, showing a wealth of new forms endowed with an unprecedented expressiveness; thus creating a new art of portraiture which has survived down the centuries. The Greeks gave the world the finest examples of human portraiture on coins, and this type continued to be the model for subsequent Indian currencies for many centuries. After the Muslim invasion of India the Islamic coins featured inscriptions instead of portraits.

Mythological Subjects

Mythology served as a limitless source from which artists drew their inspiration and, for the first time, myths acquired significance in eloquent and tangible depictions on coinage. To the Greeks, thus, goes the credit for introducing a whole series of subjects: divinities drawn from Greek mythology, local divinities, pictorial representations of city goddesses and semi-tutelary divinities. To this rich repertoire were also added plant and animal motifs and birds, generally Greek in conception but at times influenced by the oriental cultural milieu.

Greek deities who adorned the reverse and occasionally the obverse of the coins are Zeus (Father of the Gods), Heracles, Poseidon, Hermes, Dionysius, Apollo, and the Dioscouroi (twin brothers, Castor and Pollux corresponding to the Indian Asvins). Symbols and attributes of some of these gods, the two "pilot," the cap of the Dioscauri and the tripod of Apollo are also of frequent occurrence. Female divinities like Pallas Athene, Nike, *Fig. 4* Artemis and Demeter, are also depicted. The preference for Goddess Pallas Athene may not be accidental: a special significance seems to have been attached to this deity, the goddess of warfare, who is invariably depicted as hurling a thunderbolt on the coins of Menander and those of the later Indo-Greek monarchs. Her sacred bird, the owl, which was a symbol of wisdom also finds a place on the reverse of many coins of Menander and Archebios (80-60 B.C.). *Fig. 5*

Inscriptions

The titles introduced on coins of the Bactrian Greeks in India suggest that they were imitating the Arsakid kings of Iran, who had copied them

from the Seleucid Syrian coins. *Basileos,* the Greek word for "king" in the genitive (*Rajane* in Prakrit), is one of the most common titles inscribed on all the coin issues—in Greek on the obverse with an exact Prakrit rendering on the reverse. Of frequent occurrence are titles such as *Soteros* which means "Saviour;" its Prakrit equivalent is *tradarasa* or *tratarasa; Megalos* (Great, Prakrit *Mahatasa); Aniketos* (Invincible, Prakrit *Aparajitasa; Nikephoros* (Holder of Victory, Prakrit *Jayadharasa); Ephiphanos* (God Manifest; Prakrit *Prachachhasa), Dikaios* (Pious, Prakrit *Dharamikasa); Euergetou* (Benefactor, Prakrit *Kalyanakarmasa); Theotropou* (God-like); *Philopatoros* (Beloved of his father, Prakrit *Piyapitasa).* An unusual title, *Autocratoros* (of the Autocrator), appears on a coin of the later Indo-Greek monarch, Theophilos (80-60 B.C.). It is reminiscent of a similar title on the coins of a Seleucid Syrian ruler Tryphon (Diodotos, 142-135 B.C.) copied later by that famous Parthian ruler Gondophernes on his coins. These attributive epithets are sometimes inscribed along with the royal title *Basileos* and all are almost invariably rendered in Prakrit in the local scripts on the bilingual coins issued for their possessions south of the Hindu Kush.

Similarly, the coins of the Indo-Greeks, particularly those issued in the Gandharan region, bear bilingual legends in Greek on the obverse and Prakrit on the reverse and are bi-scriptal using Greek and Kharoshthi or Brahmi. These bilingual issues of the Graeco-Bactrians in India, are striking and significant. The very existence of this monetary bilingualism indicates that social conditions to the south of the Hindu Kush were very different from those of Bactria; the original home of the Indo-Greeks. The urban population was a mixture of Achaemenids and Greeks in Bactria to whom the Greek inscriptions on the coins were sufficient and intelligible. In India on the other hand, a considerable mercantile clan in the Indian territories not only had a currency of their own, but were conversant with the Prakrit language and local scripts such as Kharoshthi and Brahmi. The Graeco-Bactrian rulers in India had to resort to the issue of a coinage which could satisfy local requirements and hence the use of the Prakrit language and the local scripts were meant mainly for an Indian urban society.

Local Motifs

The Indo-Greek coinage shows a progressive indigenisation which was evidently dictated by local needs. This is seen in various aspects such as the weight standard, types, symbols, language and script. A striking example of Greek deities who acquire the status of tutelary divinities of cities ruled by Indo-Greeks is illustrated by the coins with the inscription *"Kavisaye Nagara devata."* The inscription, being in an Indian language and script, is obviously an attempt at localising an alien deity. Subsequently, the later Indo-Greek princes minted this type of coin omitting the label because the complete identification of the deity with Kapisa had rendered the legend superfluous.

Perhaps no other Indo-Greek rulers showed such sensitivity to local cults and beliefs as did the two sub-kings Agathocles (171-160 B.C.) and Pantaleon (171-160 B.C.). When they moved into the Kabul valley they issued coins for the local Greek population celebrating the cult of Dionysius, the mythical ancestor of the Greeks settled in the Orient prior to Alexander. In Gandhara they issued bilingual coins with inscriptions in the local scripts, (Kharoshthi and Brahmi). From the mint at Taxila, they struck coins to facilitate trade. These coins featured Buddhist motifs such as the tree-in-railing and the stupa instead of the portrait and, on the reverse, the name of the issuer in Brahmi script replaced the Greek deity. Yet another series of bronze money struck by them depicts the goddess Lakshmi, a Brahmanical divinity, attired in Greek garb. The local cults and beliefs in and around the region of Taxila are encountered in Agathocles' coins which feature figures of Samkarshana and Vasudeva with inscriptions in both Greek and Prakrit. *"Basileos Agathocles"* is the inscription on the obverse while the reverse
Fig. 6 legend in Prakrit language and Brahmi script reads *"Rajane Agathukreyasa."* Rock drawings of exactly identical figures labelled in the first century script occur at Chilas in the Karakorum range and attest the popularity of the Bhagavata cult in this region as early as the close of the second

century B.C.—and is of great significance comparable to the Heliodoros pillar inscription at Besnagar in central India which records that a *garudadhvaja* was erected by Heliodoros, a Bhagavata, inhabitant of Takshasila (Taxila), who came as a Greek ambassador from the Indo-Greek king, Maharaja Antialcidas (145-130 B.C.), to the Indian king, Kasiputra Bhagabhadra.

In comparison with the above types, the coins of that famous Indo-Greek ruler Menander, hardly reveal any sympathy to local feelings, to local cults and religious beliefs. His numerous coins attest the vast size of his kingdom and its flourishing commerce in western Punjab and Gandhara, up to the Indus with its capital at Taxila, Arachosia and the Kabul valley. His coins—the drachmas and tetra drachmas—are mostly of silver and less of copper. They are more Greek in conception than what would be expected. Evidently there was less interaction between the Greeks and Indians; each group followed its own way of life fenced off by religion and society. The Greeks remained within their fortified cities, where Pallas Athene, the Greek goddess who combined wisdom and power, was the patron deity. Many currency issues of Menander depict her on the reverse. Fewer Indian symbols appear on his coins than on those of his predecessors Agathocles and Pantaleon, even though the bilingualism of his coin series showed his anxiety to accommodate the interest of the local races. This attitude of Menander appears strange because of the evidence provided by Plutarch and the *Milinda Panha* makes it clear that he developed an interest in Indian religion and was drawn particularly to Buddhism, which earned him the veneration of the Buddhists. Apart from Greek gods and goddesses, Menander's coins depict a striking menagerie of animals and birds such *Fig. 7* as the dolphin, ox, elephants, humped Bactrian camel and the owl associated with Athene.

The Audumbaras and Kunindas ruled the adjoining region and later issued semi-drachmas which, although strongly influenced by those of Menander and Apollodotes, both as regards type and weight, were still *Fig. 8* Indian in conception. Symbols rather than portraits adorn their coins.

The later Indo-Greek rulers issued stereotyped repetitions of the earlier Indo-Greek coins belonging to their predecessors in silver and copper and had very little variety to contribute. Many coin issues such as those of Lysias (145-135 B.C.), Strato (130 B.C.), Philoxenos (110-80 B.C.), Archebios, Theophilos, Nicias, Hippostratos, Telephos (all 80-60 B.C.), Dionysius (80-75 B.C.), Amyntas and Artemindoros (60-40 B.C.) and Hermaios (40-1 B.C.). *Figs. 9-15*

Commemorative Coins

In addition to the usual types of regular currency issues, commemorative coins and victory medallions were also struck by some Indo-Greek rulers. They reveal a fictitious pedigree of the Seleucid house, which traced their descent to the Macedonian conqueror Alexander. Among the Indo-Greeks, Agathocles and Antimachos, to name a few, issued pedigree coins while victory medallions are known of Eucratides and Amyntas (60-40 B.C.).

Monograms

The Bactrian and Indo-Greek coins often bear some enigmatic devices which have been described as monograms. They have been more of a numismatic puzzle than a recognisable clue to Indo-Greek history and currency. The Seleucid coins had borne monograms which the rival branches of Bactrian Greeks in India borrowed. Hence the monograms are made up of Greek letters, single Kharoshthi letters or ligatures. To read the names of mint cities into these monograms would hardly be possible since they lend themselves to a variety of interpretations. No single monogram of any mint has so far been conclusively identified.

The Seleucid monograms represented moneyers and they had been established beyond doubt as the marks of successive mint masters and changing city magistrates. That the Bactrian and Indo-Greek monograms may also be those of mint masters or city magistrates is not unlikely. Furthermore, as the monograms found on the coins are far too many, the only other plausible explanation would be that they denoted control marks

of the moneyers, where Kharoshthi letters are found inscribed along with a distinctive Greek monogram—as found, for instance, on the coins of Hippostratos—which may indicate the presence of a Greek and an Indian mint-master or moneyer. The interpretation of these control marks may help to identify the region of issue over which they had control.

Both the Seleucids and the Bactrian Greeks operated a few regular mints such as those of Alexandria (Kapisa) and Begram in Bactria, as well as Pushkalavati (Peshawar) and Taxila in Gandhara. There was perhaps one each at Sagala (Sialkot) and Bucephala in eastern Punjab, the last one probably operating under the Indo-Greek ruler Hippostratos (80-60 B.C.).

The Indo-Greek Era

The Indo-Greek coins bear no date, although the idea of reckoning time from a fixed date came to India with the Greeks. The Seleucid era marks the first comprehensive reckoning of time from a historical event, beginning with Seleucus' return to Babylon in 312 B.C. This time reference—a mixed form of Macedonian months and the Babylonian year—was used by the Seleucids in dating their coin issues. The Parthian kings had a system of reckoning known as the Arsacid era, the initial year of which was 248-247 B.C., indicating the date of the establishment of the kingdom by the founder Tiridates. It was, however, certainly the Macedonian calendar, beginning in October 312 B.C., which the half-Seleucid kings of Bactria brought to India and this might have given birth to the other Indian eras. Macedonian month names appear on Shaka and Kushana records. Neither the Seleucid system of dating nor the less satisfactory method of indicating only the regnal year on the Ptolemaic coins of Egypt was adopted by either the Bactrian Greeks or the Indo-Greeks to date their coins.

Metal Content and Technique

Silver was the primary metal used by the Indo-Greeks for coin production right down to tiny denominations. Panjhir in the Hindu Kush was the major source of silver as the chief silver mines lay there. Gold was minted rarely. The few Indo-Greek gold coins were struck on the Attic weight standard for circulation within the northern and southern regions of the Hindu Kush. Based on the Attic standard of weight, these rare gold staters tariffed well with the *suvarna*, the Indian gold unit. Such gold staters were minted by a few monarchs, Diodotos I and II (256-230 B.C.), Euthydemos (230-190 B.C.), Eucratides and Agathocles (130-110 B.C.). Gold staters of other Indo-Greeks are so far unknown. For their silver currencies, the Indo-Bactrian Greeks employed different weight standards. It is evident that the Seleucids and the Bactrian Greeks were forced to adopt the Indian weight standards for the eastern part of the empire which had close trade and commercial links with the north-western provinces (present Pakistan). Some silver vessels unearthed at Taxila, datable to the first century A.D., bear the value inscribed in Greek staters, drachmas and obols which represent Attic weight standard and currency of the Seleucid empire adopted by the Bacterian Greeks, the Shakas and the Parthians. The unit of weight for copper currency was known as *chalkon*. Coins in other metals were also struck sparingly by a few Indian monarchs.

The Indo-Greek coins follow the die-striking technique, thereby introducing a new technique for subsequent Indian currencies. The orientation of the die axes on their coins is remarkably consistent and gradually attains perfection in the later coins for which parallel die axes have been used.

One of the lasting influences of Greek culture over India was in the sphere of coinage resulting from a close interaction between the two civilisations. The Indo-Greek coinage represents a meeting point of Greek and Indian concepts which provided a prototypal model for all the subsequent dynastic issues of India.

The Indianisation of the Greeks, their art forms and conceptions, was so complete that Indo-Greek coinage belongs more to Indian numismatic history than to either Greek or West Asian.

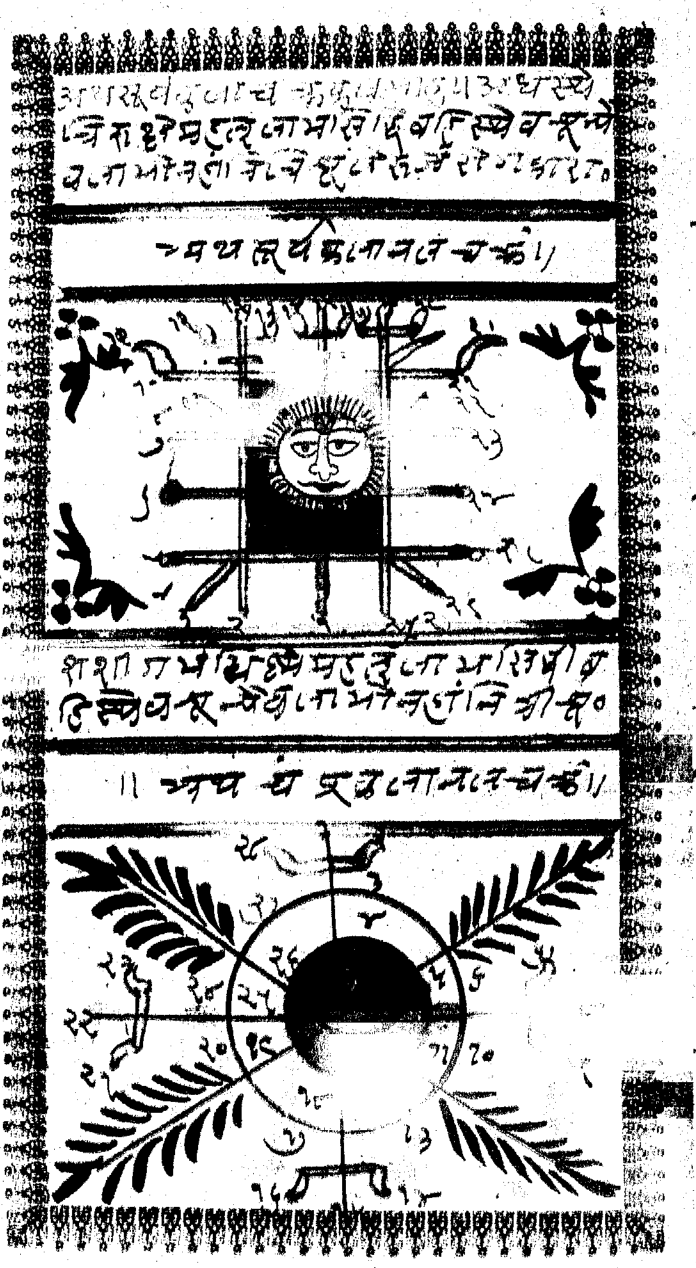
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PROPHESY OF THE PLANETS

M. C. Joshi

Horoscopy is a special branch of astrology in which predictions are made concerning an individual's destiny based on the positions and combinations of planets at the time of his birth.



1



2

1 *Janmapatrika* of Madhavlal, son of Harilal
Samvat 1912 (A.D. 1855), Rajasthan
Paper
Collection: Prince of Wales Museum of Western India, Bombay
Courtesy: Trustees of the Prince of Wales Museum of Western India, Bombay

2 Birth of a Prince by Bishandas
c. A.D. 1620, Mughal
Watercolour on paper, 26.4 x 16.4 cm
Francis Bartlett Donation of 1912 and Picture Fund
Collection & Courtesy, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

3 Detail of Fig 2

Although the belief in planetary positions as determinants of one's fate does not strictly conform with the uniformly accepted concept of *karma* the horoscopic system has been an integral part of the Hindu way of life since ancient times.

Astrology has a hoary antiquity in the Indian context and, according to some foreign scholars, can be traced to the Indus Valley Civilisation. They advocate the existence of the concept of astral divinities on the Harappan seals and sealings,[1] but their view has been largely contested. It is, in fact, Vedic literature which contains the earliest references to astronomical and astrological concepts which are chiefly lunar in character, despite the use of the solar calendar amongst the Vedic people. Vedic astrology is based on fortnightly lunar days known as *tithis* and the lunar zodiac system which consists of twenty-seven or twenty-eight *nakshatras* or asterisms:

Ashvini (Arietis), *Bharani* (Arietis and Musea), *Krittika* (Tauri, Pleiades), *Rohini* (Tauri Aldebaran), *Mrigashirsha* (Orionis), *Ardra* (Orionis), *Punarvasu* (Geminorum or Geminu Pollux), *Tishya* or *Pushya* (Cancri), *Ashlesa* (Hydrae), *Magha* (Leonis, Regulus), *Purva-Phalguni* (Leonis), *Uttara-Phalguni* (Leonis), *Hasta* (Corvi), *Chitra* (Virginis, Spica), *Svati* (Bootis, Arcuturus), *Vishakha* (Librae), *Anuradha* (Scorpionis), *Jyeshtha* (Scorpionis, Anteres), *Mula* (Scorpionis Lyrae), *Shravana* (Aquilae), *Dhanistha* (Delphini), *Shatabhisha* (Aquarii), *Purva-Bhadrapada* (Pegasi and Andronedie), *Uttara-Bhadrapada* (Pegasi) and *Revati* (Piscium).

It appears that the Vedic societies believed in auspicious and inauspicious times for performing important ceremonies and functions. Subsequently, Vedic communities seem to have developed some kind of predictive astrology. By the early historic period predictions were also made on the basis of bodily-marks of human beings. The science was perhaps originally known as *anga-vidya* and, later on, as *samudrika shastra* which still exists in India. Another system of foretelling future events was based on good and bad omens occurring either in daily life or in dreams; it was called *shakuna shastra.* This system is also prevalent in the Buddhist and Jain traditions where auspicious dreams are seen by the mother of Vardhamana[2] (Mahavira) and that of Gautama (the Buddha) foretelling the great future of the two Kshatriya princes before their births. Ancient Buddhist literary sources also record that the sage Asita prophesised the future greatness of the Buddha at the time of the latter's birth.[3]

The importance of the *nakshatra* system (lunar zodiac) is also reflected in the reference to the *Tishya* or *Pushya nakshatra* in Ashoka's edicts at Kalinga. Possibly Ashoka ascended the throne on a day marked by *Tishya nakshatra* or might have declared himself as the lawful ruler of Kalinga country on that day—around his eighth regnal year.

The significance of the *nakshatra* system in ancient Indian society is also suggested by certain coins and seals, dated between the second century B.C. and the second century A.D., bearing proper names based on *nakshatras* such as *Svatirakshita, Phalgunimitra, Pushyamitra, Vishakhadatta* and *Revatimitra.* It is also interesting to note that the presiding deity of each *nakshatra* is stated to be a Vedic divinity, such as Ashvins, Yama, Agni, Brahman, Chandra, Rudra, Aditi or Bhaga. This shows that the origin of the system was connected with Vedic traditions and Vedic mythology.

The archaic tradition of predictive lunar astrology is partially preserved in the Jain work, *Bhadrabahu Samhita,*[4] as well as in a section of the *Divyavadana,*[5] which is a collection of Buddhist stories associated with the northern Buddhist tradition. The *Bhadrabahu Samhita* is believed to have been authored by the famous Jain saint, Bhadrabahu, a contemporary and, according to Digambara Jain sources, the *guru* of Chandragupta Maurya (fourth/third century B.C.).

A Brief Historical Survey

The traditional structure of Indian astrology changed radically as a result of Greek contact, especially between the second century B.C. and the second century A.D. India's cultural links with the Hellenic world intensified during the Mauryan age when embassies and perhaps cultural missions



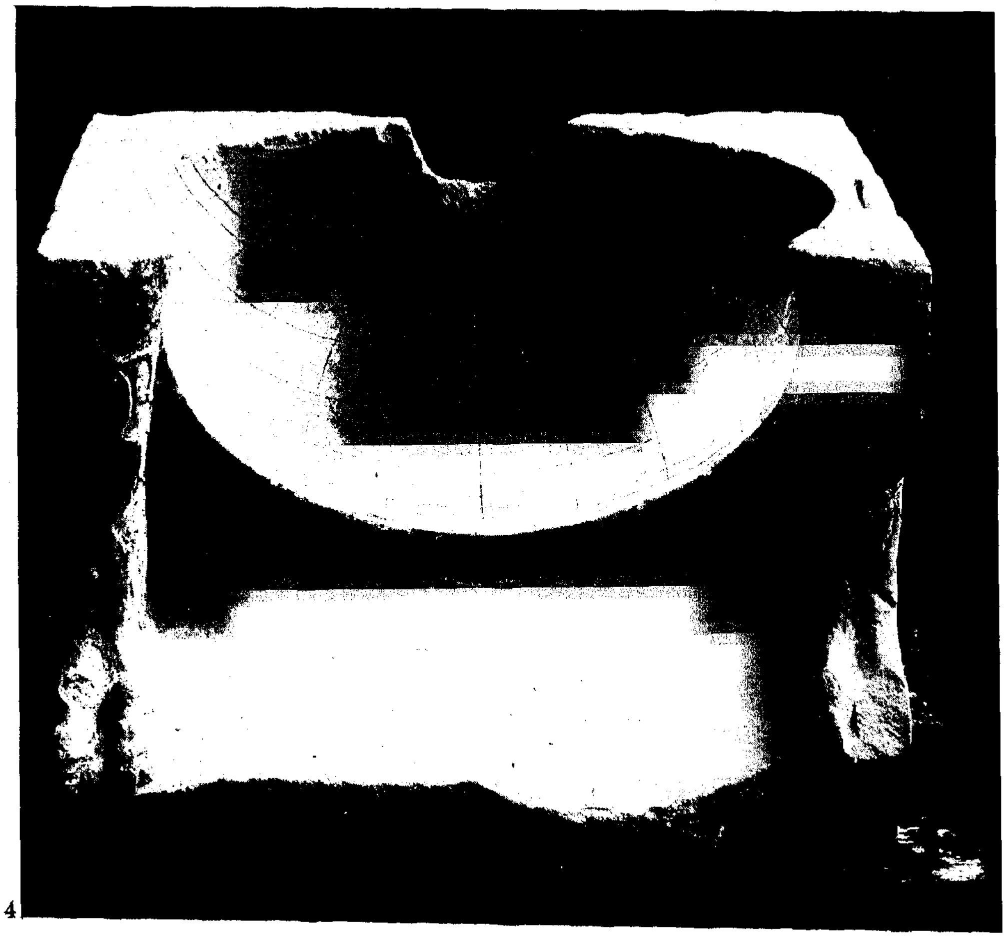
3

were exchanged between Mauryan monarchs and Greek kings. In the period that followed—during the second and the first century B.C.—the formation of a number of Greek states in the regions of Punjab, Gandhara, Afghanistan and Bactria appears to have contributed to a greater exchange of ideas and material items.

The Greeks (*Yavanas*) were often praised for their knowledge and learning in different fields in the Indian traditions. For instance, the *Mahabharata* refers to them as *sarvajna yavanas* (Greeks possessing knowledge in all spheres). An astrological text, the *Brihat Samhita* of Varahamihira records that the Greeks (*Yavanas*) deserve to be worshipped like the Indian *rishis* (sages) on account of their perfect knowledge of scientific *shastras* (treatises). Undoubtedly, these references indicate the recognition of Greek (Hellenistic) expertise and scholarship by Indians in important fields of knowledge—particularly astronomy and astrology.

Much seems to have been added to the Indians' knowledge of solar astronomy by virtue of their Hellenistic contacts, and, in fact, many of these new astronomical elements and ideas provided the foundation for astrological and horoscopic studies in this country. Of the five well-known schools of ancient Indian astronomy—*Paitamsha, Saura, Vashistha, Romaka* and *Paulisa*—some scholars regard the last two as being of Hellenistic origin.[6] It may not be out of context here to mention that in the excavations of the Greek city of Ai Khanoum on the left bank of River Oxus (modern Amu Darya in Afghanistan) archaeologists recovered some sun-dials[7] containing distinct markings connected with the points of sunrise of winter and summer solstices for the accuracy of time. We do not know whether these sun-dials were also used by these Greek colonists of Afghanistan for astrological purposes.

An Indian scholar, S. B. Roy[8], feels that Maya, the traditional author of the *Surya-Siddhanta,* a text on Hindu astronomy, could be identified with the famous Greek geographer and astronomer-astrologer Ptolemy. Roy's inference is based on the fact that the name 'Ptolemy' in the context of an Egyptian king has been transliterated in Ashokan epigraphs as 'Turamaya'. It is not, therefore, unlikely that around the second or third century A.D. this name was abbreviated to 'Maya' in the Sanskrit adaptation of a Western astronomical treatise.



4

4 Sun dial from the excavations at Ai-Khanoum (Afghanistan), an ancient Graeco—Bactrian town
Courtesy, Dr. Paul Bernard, Paris

It is not known precisely how the science of Hellenistic astrology was introduced in India. But most probably the early disseminators of this knowledge in most parts of India were the Maga Brahmanas of Iranian origin (also known as Bhojakas in the Indian tradition). The Magi (Zorastrian) priests of Iran, who came to Delhi sometime in the early centuries of the Christian Era, were elevated to the status of Brahmanas. They were stated to have been invited to this country as priests for the worship of the Sun God whose early images in India depict him in the typical northern (Central Asian) attire. Interestingly, Varahamihira, the reputed Indian astrologer of *c.* sixth century A.D., refers to his father, Adityadasa, as his teacher who appears to have been a Maga Brahmana. Varaha's son, Prithuyasha, author of *Satpancashika,* was also an astrologer. Besides, an interesting reference in Bana's *Harshacharita* about the predictions of a Bhojaka (Maga)[9] astrologer named Taraka also supports our hypothesis. It can be further surmised that the spread of solar astrology—and also perhaps horoscopy—in India in its early stages was connected in some way with the cult of the sun.

Around the beginning of the Christian Era, the Graeco-Egyptian astrological tradition—which has also incorporated traits of archaic West Asian astrology—seems to have served as the chief source of Indian horoscopy. Pingree believes that Hellenistic astrology was transmitted from Roman Egypt (City of Alexandria) to western India perhaps through the *Yavana* traders mentioned in Buddhist cave inscriptions. It is also possible that the science of solar horoscopy was brought to India from the Hellenistic world by Indianised foreigners. Some of their concepts influenced Indian astrologers associated with traders or with kings ruling in western or north-western India.

The major Hellenic and Hellenistic contribution to Hindu astrology was the introduction of solar zodiac signs or the twelve *rashis: Mesha* (Aries), *Vrisha* (Taurus), *Mithuna* (Gemini), *Karka* (Cancer), *Simha* (Leo), *Kanya* (Virgo), *Tula* (Libra), *Vrishchika* (Scorpio), *Dhanu* (Sagittarius), *Makara* (Capricorn), *Kumbha* (Aquarius) and *Mina* (Pisces); and the seven *grahas* (planets)—Sun, Moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus and Saturn—as well as the concept of the planets corresponding to the seven week-days. Another Hellenistic element adopted by the Indians was that of auspicious and inauspicious planetary combinations. These aspects, even today, form the fundamentals of predictive astrology including horoscopy in India. The technical terms used in Indian astrological works on horoscopy such as *hora, apo-klima, hibuka jyamitra* and *dreshkana,* are of Hellenistic origin and confirm the foreign roots of the subject. Elements of Greek astrology appear to have been adapted and developed in India over a long period of time covering more than one or two centuries in a gradual process of assimilation.

The earliest available Indian text on Hellenistic (solar) horoscopy is the *Yavana-Jataka* by Sphujidhvaja[10] datable to *c.* third century A.D. which is, in itself, a fully Indianised work in Sanskrit. Its author, Sphujidhvaja, who might have been either an Indianised Greek or Parthian or an Iranian priest (Maga Brahmana) mentions Yavaneshvara as his teacher. Since the term '*yavana*' in the early Indian context (from the third century B.C. to the second century A.D.) denoted a foreigner, more particularly a Greek, a *yavanacharya* most probably was an astrologer of Greek or Hellenistic origin.

Other early and notable authors of Sanskrit horoscopic texts of the Greek school were Briddha-Yavana, Satyacharya, Devasvami, Jivasharma, Minaraja, Varahamihira and Kalyanavarma. Varahamihira, lived in the sixth century A.D. and was a native of Avanti (Ujjain), an ancient centre of Indian astrology, and a master of astrological traditions and texts on astronomy. His principal text on horoscopy is known as *Brhadjjataka*[11] in which he had attempted to modify and improve upon contributions of his predecessors. In the sphere of astrology he appears to have added more *yogas* (planetary combinations) and *dashas* (good and bad periods in one's life). Kalyanavarma, who has been variously assigned dates from the close of the sixth to the ninth century by different scholars, was a feudal chief of north or east Bengal and the celebrated author of *Saravali,* a voluminous treatise on horoscopy; he has been quoted by Bhatta Utpala in his commentary on Varahamihira's work in the ninth century.[12] An interesting point of the *Saravali* is that it mentions

eight planets, instead of seven, with the addition of the planet Rahu. All of them form the concept of *kala purusha* (time personified).[13]

The first depiction of the eight planets (including Rahu) in Indian art as per available evidence cannot be dated before the later Gupta period.[14] Kalyanavarma, therefore, cannot be assigned a date prior to *c.* seventh century A.D. The *Saravali*, significantly, refers only to a few predictive combinations involving Rahu in relation to the other planets.

Among other ancient texts on horoscopic astrology, two are notable: the *Jaimini Sutras*, composed *c.* eighth century, and known for its style of writing in archaic *sutra* form and its partial recognition of Rahu and Ketu; and the *Brihat Parashara-hora Shastram*, famous for its many details. Pingree[15] has dated the latter work to the seventh century. While it is true that the antiquity of the astrological system introduced by Parashara may be traced back to the pre-eighth century period, the *Brihat Parashara-hora Shastram*, in its extent form,[16] appears to be a subsequent date for the following reasons: the text is well-developed, detailed and contains references to nine planets, including Rahu and Ketu, as well as to their association with the first nine out of the ten *avataras* (incarnations) of Vishnu. For the first time an adequate synthesis of solar systems of astrology was achieved. Moreover, it has chapters on body-marks, pacification ceremonies and rites, *shanti-karma* prescribed for the removal or minimisation of the evil effects of the planets, as well as other miscellaneous matters connected with the subject.[17] The author of the *Brihat Parashara-hora Shastram* also makes a detailed study of the *dasa* (astrological stage of life) system and standardises the *Vimgottari-dasa* system which itself is based on an idealised cycle of 120 years of human life as prescribed by the Hindu Shastric tradition. Thus, it may be difficult to assign the *Brihat Parashara-hora Shastram* in its available form to a date prior to the ninth century A.D.

Noteworthy additions to Indian horoscopy were also made during the period of Indo-Islamic rule, especially around the fourteenth century and later, as a result of intimate cultural communication between Muslims and Hindus. Medieval Indian horoscopy borrowed these new elements from the Arab world and classified them under the general name of 'Tajika' of the Sanskritic tradition. A remarkable Sanskrit work on the subject is the *Tajika Nilakanthi*, produced during the reign of Akbar in 1685 by Nilakantha. The text, which deserves attention for the certain names of planetary combinations showing Arabic origin such as Iqbal, Israf, Radd, Itthasal and

5 *Navagrahas*
c. 12th century A.D., West Bengal
Courtesy, Archaeological Survey of India

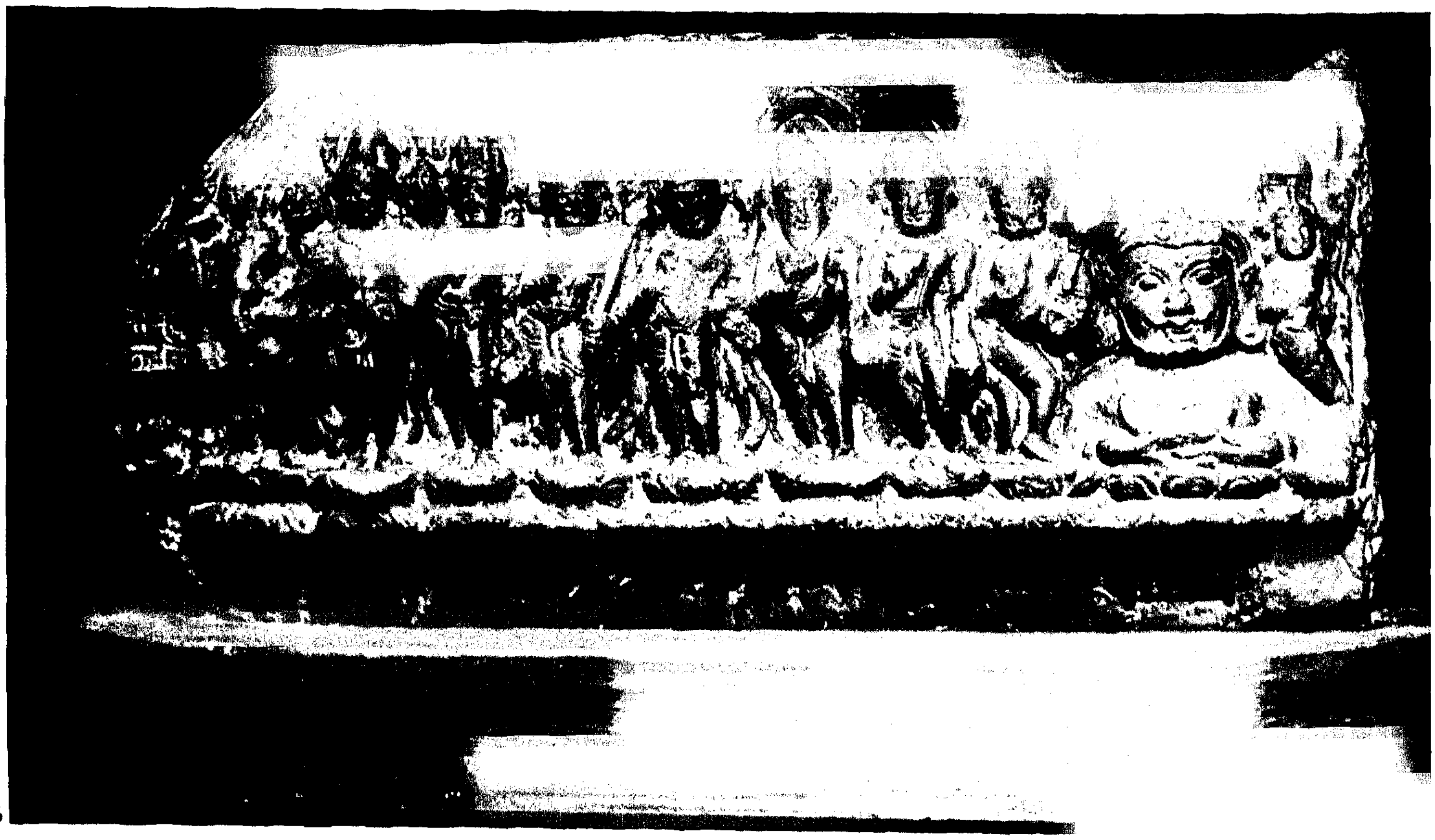
6 ***Janmapatrika*** **of a Parsi**
A.D. 1892
Courtesy, Shrimati Dosi Vakeel

7 Go. 72
Pancanga (horoscope)
dated V. S. 1900/A.D. 1843, Western Indian
Cloth, 1.86 x 0.19 m
Collection: Lalbhai Dalpatbhai Museum, Ahmedabad
Courtesy, Director, Lalbhai Dalpatbhai Museum, Ahmedabad

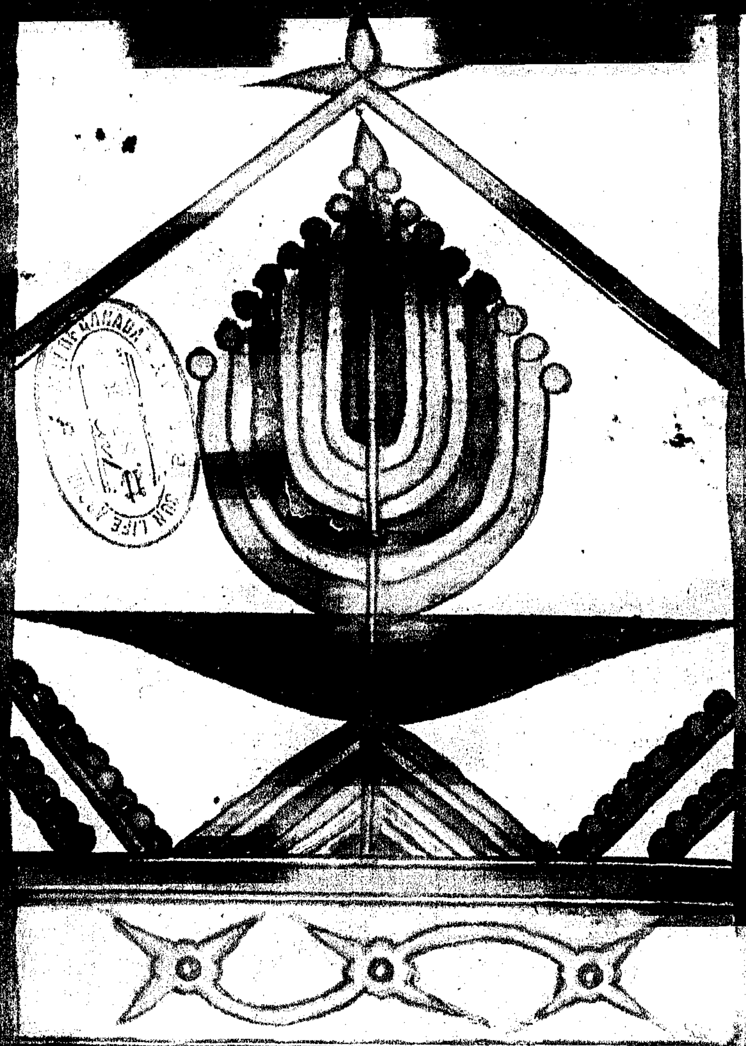
8 **Gajachakra**
Courtesy, M. C. Joshi

9 **Ashvachakra**
Courtesy, M. C. Joshi

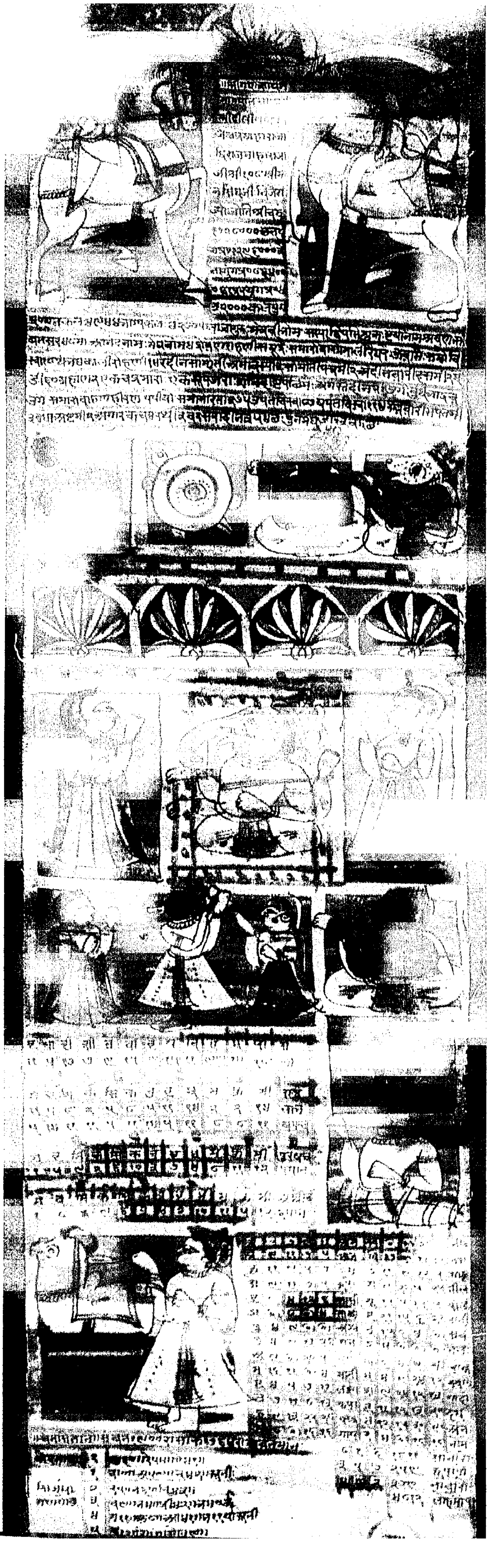
10 Go. 76
Pancanga
dated V. S. 1929/A.O. 1872, Western Indian
Paper, 2.80 x 0.16 cm
Collection: Lalbhai Dapatbhai Museum, Ahmedabad
Courtesy: Director, Lalbhai Dalpatbhai Museum, Ahmedabad

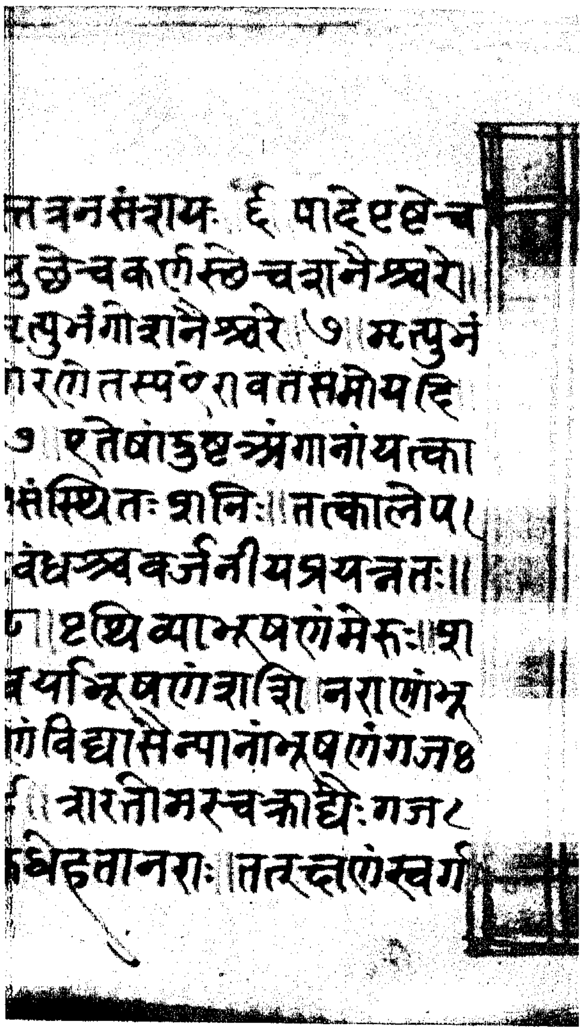


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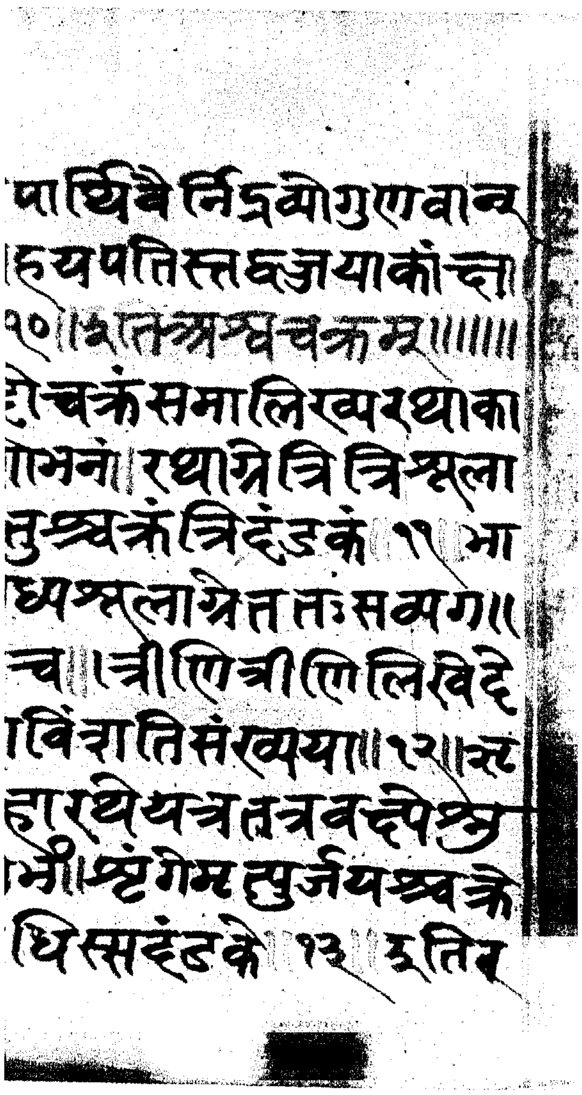


श्रीगणेशायनमः स्वस्तिश्रीजयमंगलमभ्युदयः स्वस्ति
श्रीमन्नृपविक्रमादित्यसमयातीतसंवत१८४९वर्षे
श्रीशालिवाहनकृतशाके१७१४प्रवर्तितकालेउत्तराय
नगतेश्रीसूर्येदक्षिणगोलावलंबितेश्रीगगनचक्र
चूडामणौशिशिरर्तौसन्महामांगल्यफलप्रदेपौष
मासेकृष्णपक्षे१०घटी:३९पलानि२२जन्मतिथौगु
रौवासरे विशाखाघटी:१२पलानि१६जन्मनक्षत्रेशू
लघटी:३३पलानि२१जन्मयोगे विष्टीकरणे एवंपंचां
गशुद्धौतुलाराशिस्थितचंद्रराशिनवांशेअष्टमेतुला
द्येदृषभारम्भगुरुदेवत्येव्याघ्रयोनौराक्षसगणेश्रुद्रव
र्णेसर्पवर्गेवायुहंसकेमध्यभुजिमेलग्नाद्रिस्थितेफ

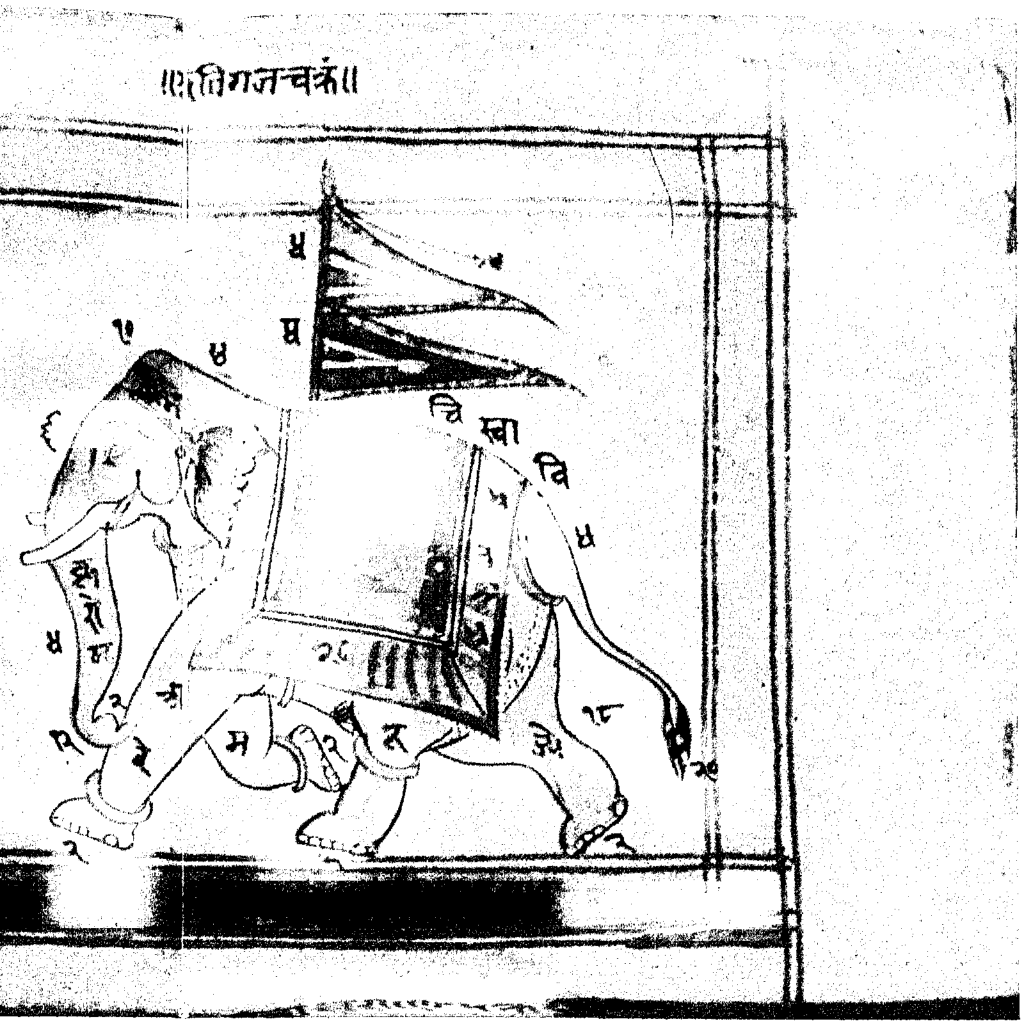




तत्रनसंशयः ६ पादेष्टेच
तुष्ठेचकर्णेस्थेचशनैश्चरे ।
स्तुभंगोशनैश्चरे ७ मस्तुभं
नरणेतस्य॰रावतसमीपद्वि
७ एतेषांदुष्टश्रंगानांयत्का
संस्थितः शनिः । तत्कालेप
वंधश्चवर्जनीयप्रयत्नतः ॥
॥ दृष्टिव्याभ्रषणंमेरुः ॥ श
बपर्भ्रषणंशत्रि । नराणांभ्र
णंविद्यासैन्यानांभ्रषणंगज ४
॥ चारतोमस्चक्रोधैः गजर
धेहवानराः । ततच्चणेस्वर्ग



पार्थिवैर्निद्रयोगुणवान्
हयपतिस्तद्वजयाकांक्षा
१० ॥ शतस्यस्यचक्रम ॥॥॥॥
रोचक्रंसमालिख्यरथाका
गभनो । रथाग्रेत्रि त्रिस्थला
तुश्चक्रंत्रिदंडकं ११ भा
ध्यस्थलाग्रेततः सम्यग ॥
च । त्रीणित्रीणिलिखेद्
विंशतिसंख्यया ॥ १२ ॥ स्व
हारथेयत्रतत्रवह्निप्र
भीस्थंगेमस्तुजयश्चक्रे
धिस्सदंडके १३ इतिर



8



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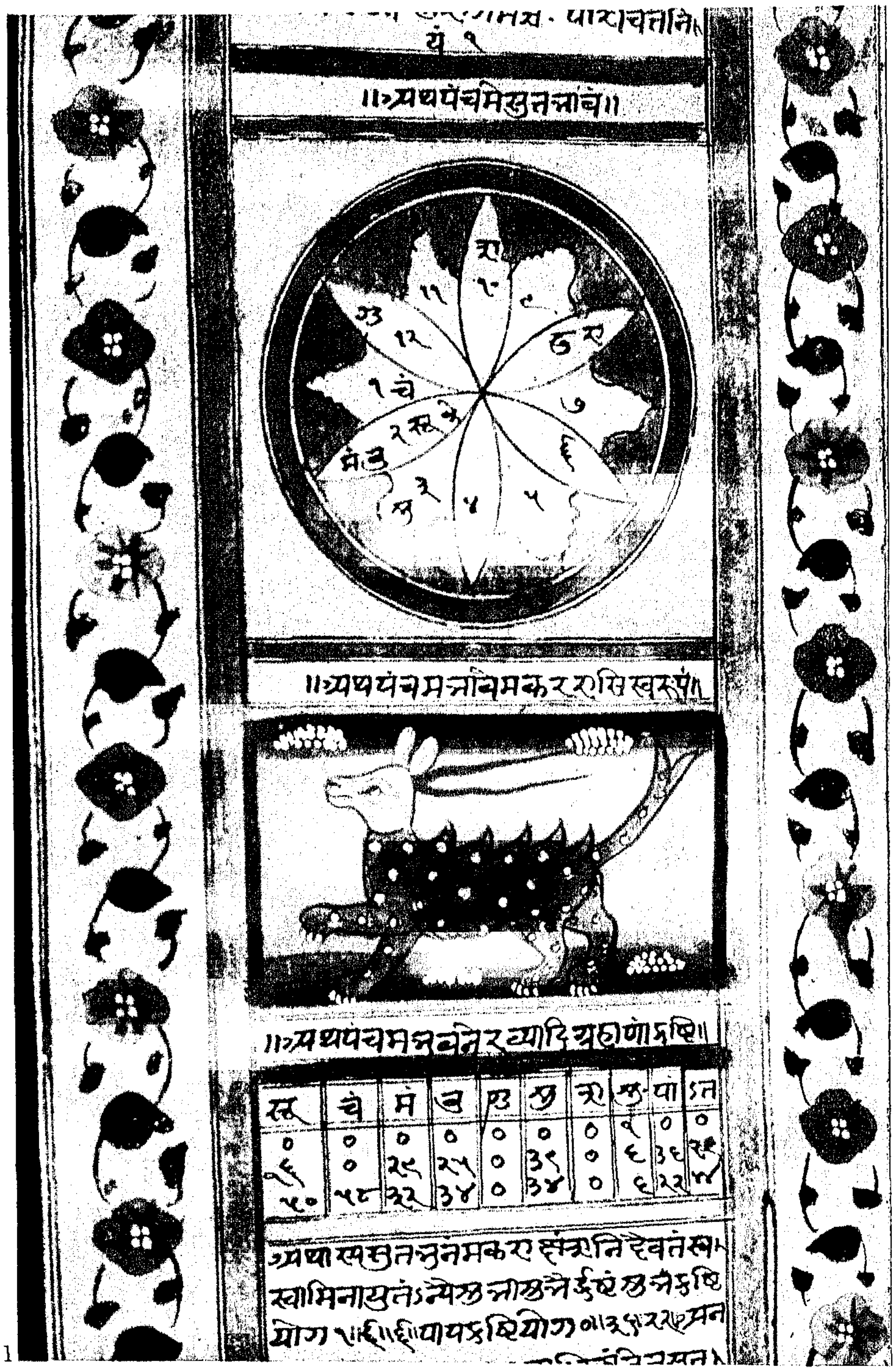
11 Makara or Capricorn
Courtesy, M. C. Joshi

12 Tula or Libra
Courtesy, M. C. Joshi

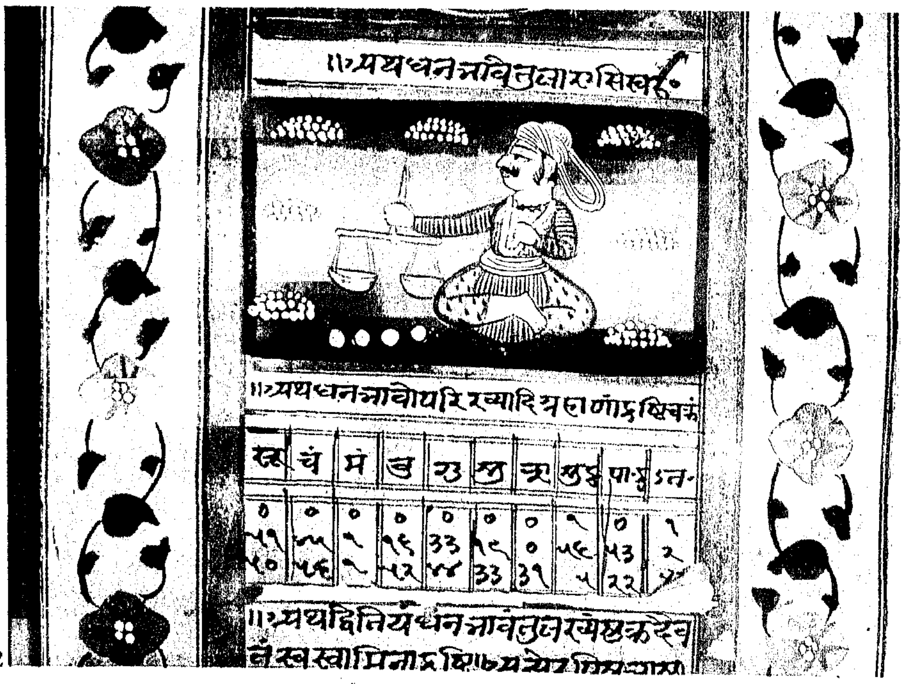
13 Form or depiction of Uma—Maheshvara
Courtesy, M. C. Joshi

14 Beginning of a horoscope cast at Varanasi
Courtesy, M. C. Joshi

15 The *Navagrahas* with relevant references (verses): horoscope cast at Varanasi
Courtesy, M. C. Joshi



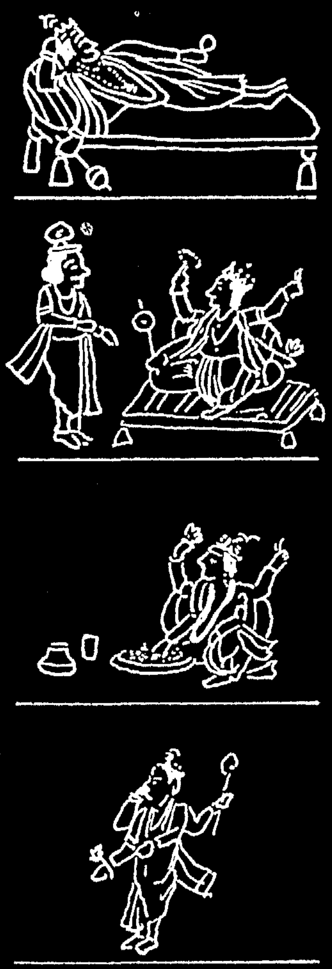
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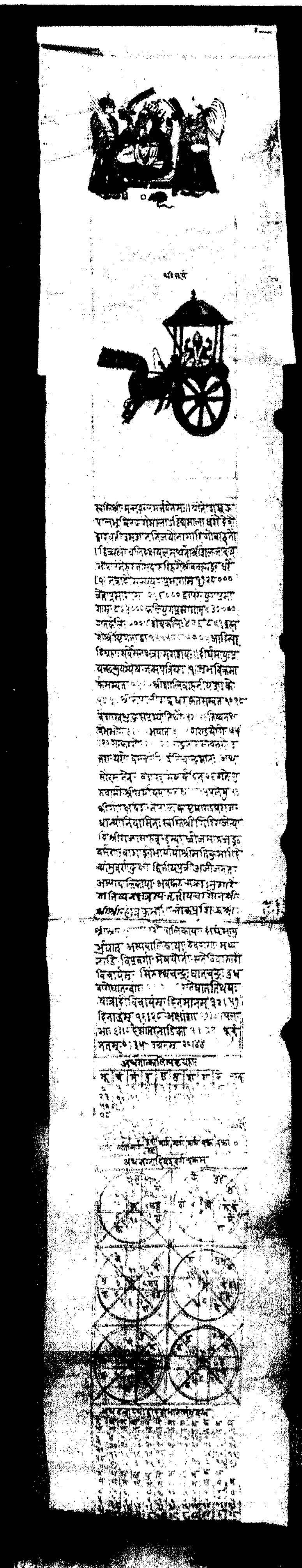


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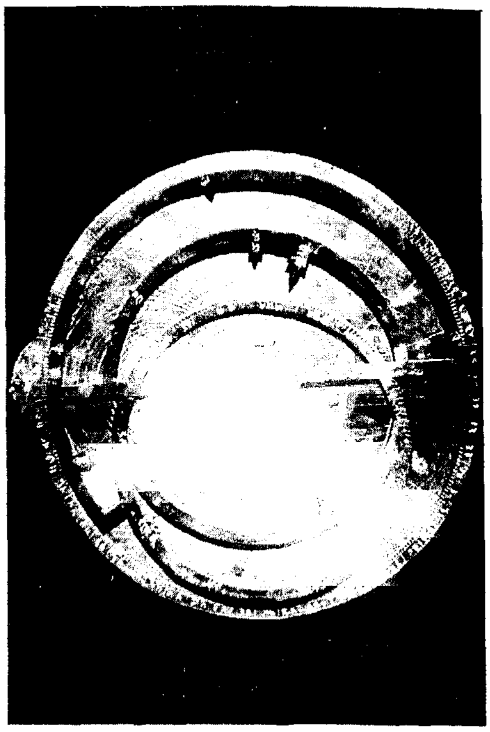
14



15

Mutthasil,[18] is commonly used for annual horoscopy *(varsha-phala)* even today. As regards the intermingling of Islamic and Hindu horoscopic traditions, a significant composition is the *Khetakautukam,* attributed to the celebrated Mughal noble, Abdu'r-Rahim Khan-i-Khanan, (1556-1627 A.D.). A notable point about Khan-i-Khanan's work is that its verses are in a Sanskrit which is intermixed with Persian, Urdu and Hindi.[19] Another significant branch of medieval astrology, totally borrowed from the Islamic-Arabian tradition, was the *Ilm-i-Ramal* or the *Ramala-Shastra*—Sanskritic works containing a large number of Arabic terms.

During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries some Indian astrologers have attempted to introduce certain elements of modern Western astrology such as the recently discovered planets, Neptune, Pluto and Uranus within the traditional format of Hindu astrology. They have also introduced modern scientific ephemeris for casting horoscopes, but the old system still prevails.

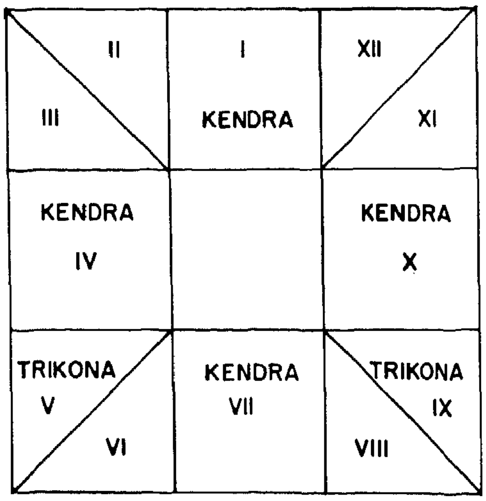


18

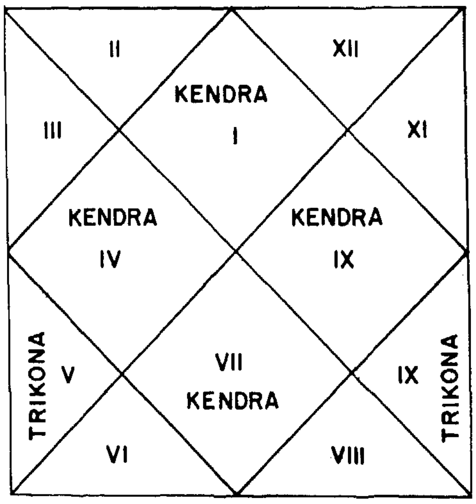
Horoscopic Patterns

Extant literary data indicates that the practice of casting horoscopes may have started in India soon after the introduction of Greek astrology. The ancient horoscopic charts and tables must have been drawn on materials such as bark, palm leaves, metal sheets or house walls, although no archaeological evidence is available to support such an assumption. It appears that the ancient horoscopes, such as the traditional south Indian specimens, were originally shorter in size and contained a few details.

The assessment of available data reveals that the original form of a person's birth-chart *(janmangam* or *lagna-kundali)* and other associated charts, resembled a square divided into twelve houses by means of an inner rhomb or cruciform and diagonals with the fixed position of the ascendent *(lagna)* and not of the signs of zodiac. It is only with such diagrams that the idea of *kendras* (central houses or quadrants: 1st, 4th, 7th and 10th houses), and *trikonas* (triangles: 1st, 5th and 9th houses) as described in the ancient texts, can be properly explained. Thus, the pattern of the modern north Indian astrological charts, *kundalis,* seem closer to the original type rather than those of southern or eastern India.



16



17

Perhaps the practice of casting shorter horoscopes continued in India until the early Islamic period; but with the easy availability of paper and the growing patronage of kings, princes, nobility and traders, the system of producing detailed and ornate horoscopes in the form of scrolls seems to have come into vogue in upper India.

Perhaps, the idea of scrolled horoscopes was derived from the pattern of royal *farmans* (orders) and Jain *vijnaptipatras*[20] (scrolls of entreaty) for their better preservation. The older scrolled horoscopes were colourful, ornate and detailed—containing specific predictions associated with the person's life. But their size and details depended upon a patron's capacity to pay the astrologer. The practice of decorating scrolled horoscopes can be traced back to the Mughal period and is current in Nepal. Unfortunately, the

16, 17 Probable designs of ancient birth diagrams
Courtesy, M. C. Joshi

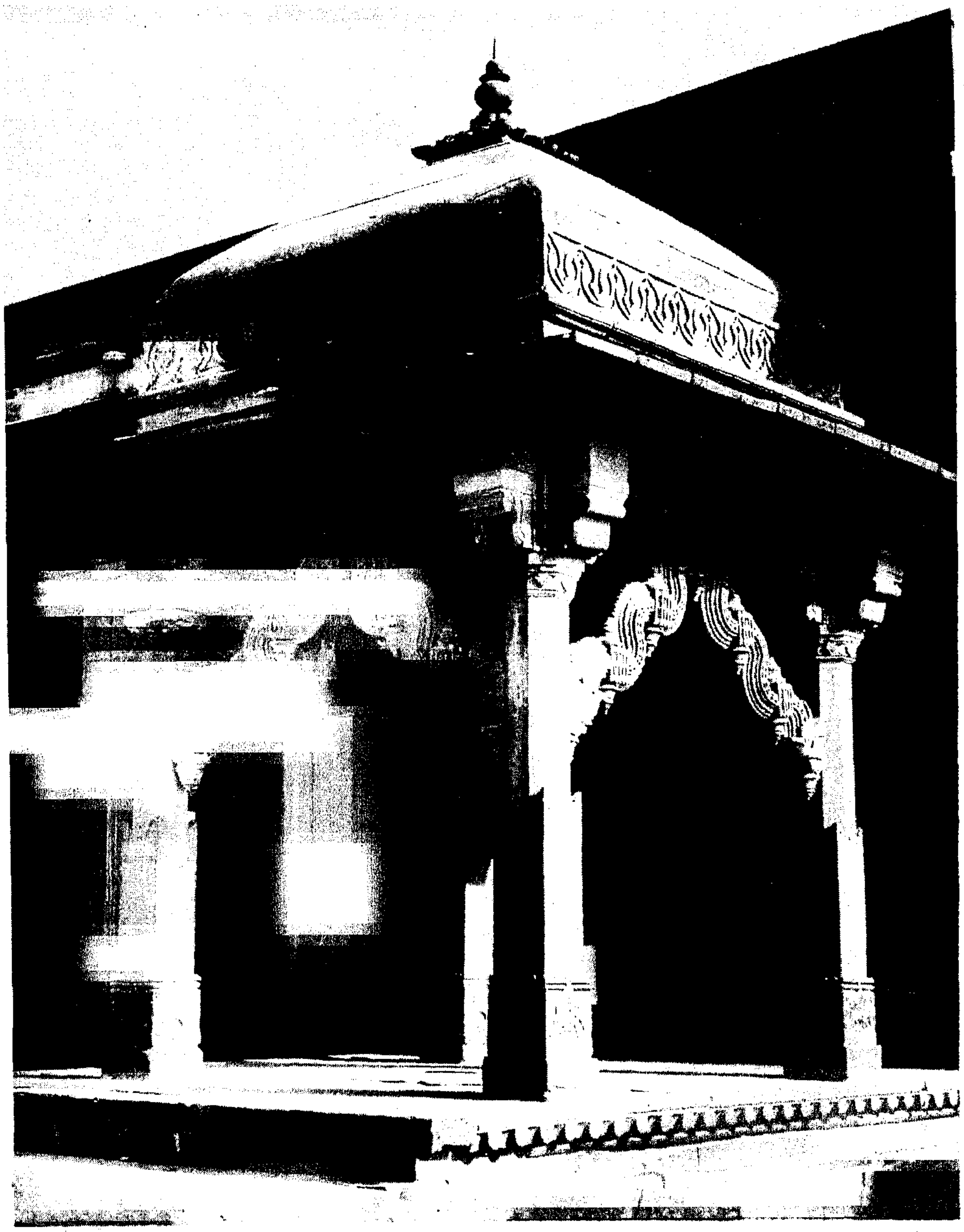
18 Astralobe
Collection: Lalbhai Dalpatbhai Museum, Ahmedabad
Courtesy, Director, Lalbhai Dalpatbhai Museum, Ahmedabad

19 Astrologer's seat, Fatehpur Sikri
Courtesy, Archaeological Survey of India

tradition of horoscopic scrolls is gradually dying out now.

During the medieval period, astrology assumed such relevance that every important person preferred to have his own astrologer. Even the enlightened ruler, Akbar, felt the necessity of an astrologer and he had a separate ornamental kiosk constructed for himself close to the imperial palaces of Fatehpur Sikri. This is also supported by a recently located early Akbari illustrated manuscript of Tilasna and zodiac in the Raza Library, Rampur.[21]

A horoscope basically consists of a chart with twelve houses or compartments for zodiac signs shown in relation to the position of the sun, the moon and other planets at the time of an individual's birth. Its principal contents, besides the birth-charts, are the *dashas* (planetary stages in one's life), table of degrees of planets and a short introduction referring to the year of the person's birth in various eras, date, day and time of birth and associated *nakshatras.* It also contains the name of the person concerned and the names of his parent or parents, and sometimes such particulars as his native place and status. The nature of details in a scrolled horoscope and its decorative character depended primarily on the acuteness of the patron's desire to know his own future as well as his aesthetic taste. In addition to the actual birth-diagram, a horoscope may contain charts pertaining to two, three (of 10° each), seven, nine, twelve, and thirty parts of the zodiacal house, technically known as *hora, dreshkana* or *drekkan* (decanata) *saptamamsha, navamsha, dvadashamsha* and *trimshamsha,* respectively. A detailed horoscope thus contains four, eight, sixteen or more *kundalis* (charts), *chakras* (diagrams) tables and references to diverse planetary


19

combinations relevant to a person's life, important future events and even pacification rites to ward off evil effects.

The horoscopic illuminations are of diverse types. They range from simple coloured borders, charts, tables and diagrams and geometrical decorative designs at the outer end of the scroll to the depiction of figures of planets, signs of the zodiac, deities and astrological themes or concepts in accordance with the desired details. In larger horoscopes most of the paintings seem to have been executed by a specific class of artists; but in ordinary horoscopic scrolls astrologers themselves do the colour work.

It cannot be conclusively established which factors prompted an astrologer to invent illuminated horoscopic scrolls. Yet, the basic inspiration to express astrology through colours and concepts was already evident in astrological texts. It is important to note that colour symbolism itself is closely associated with the planets and the signs of the zodiac which, in astrological terms, shape human form and destiny. Most inspiring in the context are the symbolic forms of *dreshkanas* or *decanus*[22].

The first *decanata* of the sign Aries is described by Varahamihira as being in the form of a "man in black colour and red eyes with a fearful look, who carries an axe in his upraised hand and is able to offer protection to anyone (seeking his refuge), and wears a white coloured waist band." The second decanate of the sign of Aries is represented as *asva;* "horse-faced woman of the form of a pitcher (fat)—wearing a red cloth and craving for food and ornaments and is (also) thirsty and one-legged," according to Yavanacharya (Greek teacher). The third decanate of Aries, is "a furious and cruel male of reddish complexion who is well versed in the arts and is even ready to undertake work even though his plans have been foiled. He holds a staff and wears clothes of red colour."

Similarly a manuscript[23] of about the eighteenth/nineteenth century preserved in a private museum at Kushinagar (U.P.) contains several predictive charts in human or animal forms which resemble those mentioned in Narapatijavacharya[24] of about the twelfth century A.D. Some of them, named as Ashvachakra, Gajachakra and Pakshichakra are boldly executed and contain colourful paintings in a popular local style. The manuscript referred to above also shows a scene of *Shantikarma* performed to subdue the effect of certain evil *nakshatras.*[25] The astrologers sometimes reproduced from manuscripts such paintings in the horoscopes to make them more attractive.

On the whole, these paintings seem to have been drawn in the contemporary Bazaar School of Uttar Pradesh which shows an inter-mixture of more than one style, including the Pahari *kalam* in a degenerated form discernible especially in multipointed crowns and profiles and some local styles, with marginal European impact visible in the treatment of the horses of the sun's chariot.

Almost all the pictures bear titles written in Devanagari and figures of Ganesha and Surya covering the upper end of the scroll as deities of auspicious beginning and overlordship of planets and skies respectively, besides the *navagrahas* and the form of a *yoga* (planetary combination) determining the personality of the native. A significant point of the depiction of nine planets is that they are not portrayed as per iconographic norms but in astrological terms in relation to their position in the horoscope and their impact on the person.

The horoscope under reference, although not a fine specimen of an illustrated scroll, certainly carries an artistic tradition which is now getting lost. Unfortunately, many good horoscopic scrolls of the medieval period have been destroyed in order to separate painted portions for sale without attention to the original context and form.[26]

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3 Bapat, P. V. (ed.); *2500 Years of Buddhism;* New Delhi 1956; p. 20
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7 Dr. Paul Bernard (Paris) supplied a few photographs of the sun-dials recovered from Ai Khanoum. See also: *Cadrons Solaires Greco Bactriens a Ali Khanoum* (Afghanistan) by Serge Veuve
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13 *Saravali,* 1, 4: *atma ravih shitakarastu chetah sattvam dharajah sheshijostha vani guruh-sito jnanamukhe madashcha rahuh shani kalanarasya duhkham*
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15 Pingree; *op-cit;* II; p. 448
16 Chandra Jha, Deva (edited and translated into Hindi); *Brihat Parasharahora Shastram;* 2nd edition; Varanasi 1978; p. 7 ff
17 *Ibid;* p. 622 ff
18 Gupta, Vasudeva (ed. and translated into Hindi); *Tajika Nilakanthi;* p. 64 ff. Also see: Shankar Bal Krishna Dikshit; *Bharatiya Jyotisha* (Hindi translation); Lucknow 1963; pp. 643-45
19 *Khetakautukam* (with Hindi translation by Dinanath Jha); 2nd edition; Banaras 1956; pp. 32-33
20 Sastri, Hiranandaa; *Ancient Vijnna tipatras;* Baroda 1942; p. 5
21 An early Akbari illustrated manuscript of tilasm and zodiac: *Lalit Kala* by K. Khandalavala and Jagdish Mittal; p. 9
22 Information obtained at Rahul-Sankrityayana Sangrahalaya (Kushinagar, U.P.), from Shri R. Sengupta (retired Director, Archaeological Survey of India) to whom I am grateful. Shri Sengupta kindly supplied slides of the illustrations from this manuscript. I have not seen this text but I believe it to be a copy of the *Narapatijayacarya* for it contains extracts from that text.
23 *Brhajjatakam,* chapter XXVII: *katyam sitavastra-veshthitah krishnah-shakta ivabhirakshitum raudrah parashum samudyatam dhatte raktavilochanah puman. Raktambara husanabhaksya chinta kumbhakrtirvajimukhi trisharta ekena padena cha meshmadhye dreshkhanarupam yavanopadishtam. Krurah kalajnah kapilah kriyarthi bhagnavrato-bhyudyata dandahastah raktani vastrani vibharti chando mesetritiya kathitastribhagah.*
24 Shri K. N. Rao (I.A.A.S., New Delhi) who is one of the great astrologers of the country explained the significance of astrology discussed in the *Narapatijayacarya Svarodaya* and other relevant details of the subject.
25 *Narapatajayacarya Svarodaya* (with a Hindi commentary by Ganesh Datt Pathak); Varanasi 1971; pp. 205, 254, 255
26 According to Dr. Jyotindra Jain, the horoscope from Gujarat was illuminated by Garoda Brahmanas, traditional horoscope painters and folk singers, of a very low social status. The horoscopes under reference belong to the early decades of the present century and are a part of the personal collection of Dr. Jain.

TRADITIONS

THE ARRESTED MOMENT

Lolita Nehru

Early in the nineteenth century, a series of chance discoveries in the north-western regions of India opened a new and most exciting chapter in Indian history.



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1 Buddhist Jataka Scene
c. 3rd-4th century A.D., Gandhara
Collection: The British Museum, London
Reproduced by courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum, London

2 Bacchanalian Scene
3rd-4th century A.D., Gandhara
Collection: The British Museum, London
Reproduced by courtesy of the Trustees of The British Museum, London

3 Coin of Eucratides
Gold
Collection: The British Museum, London
Reproduced by Courtesy of the Trustees of The British Museum, London

Thousands of coins were found, and innumerable sculptures. Most of the sculptures were carved in stone—a bluish grey schist—others were in stucco, terracotta and clay, and a few were in bronze. The most remarkable feature of these finds was the clearly Western Classical mould in which they had been made. To European eyes, here at last, amidst the bewildering maze of many-armed gods and goddesses of India, were objects which were 'understandable', and which carried many echoes of their familiar Classical heritage.

More coins and sculptures were gradually unearthed. Numerous toilet trays were found, made in stone, many of them decorated with mythological stories depicted in a Western Classical manner. Aphrodite and Eros appeared on gold plaques and ornaments, and on a stone panel was depicted the Trojan Horse (though the identification of the scene is still uncertain). Representation of Bacchanalian scenes drew clearly on Western inspiration. *Fig. 2*
Several fragments of Corinthian pillars were found, while many of the coins could vie, in technique and in quality, with their counterparts from the



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Western world. Western Classical motifs also appeared to be used freely. *Fig. 3*
Garlands with garland-bearers frequently ran along the tops of the stone *Figs. 4, 5*
reliefs, also the vine creeper; and Corinthian pilasters were often used to divide various narrative scenes. *Fig. 6*

These discoveries spread over an area which extended roughly from the Hindu Kush in the west to the Indus in the east, and from the hilly tracts of Swat, Buner and Bajaur in the north to the Kabul river—what is now northern Pakistan and the region in Afghanistan to the east of the Hindu Kush. These were the furthest limits of the ancient kingdom of Gandhara, which had been in existence, as one of the northern kingdoms of early India, since at least the time of the Buddha in the sixth century B.C.

But Western elements are not the only ingredients in Gandharan art. Most of the sculptures are Buddhist and consist, basically, of images of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas—those beings who have attained Buddha-hood—and of relief panels mostly devoted to the depiction of stories from the Buddha's life. The sculptures were arranged at various points of the



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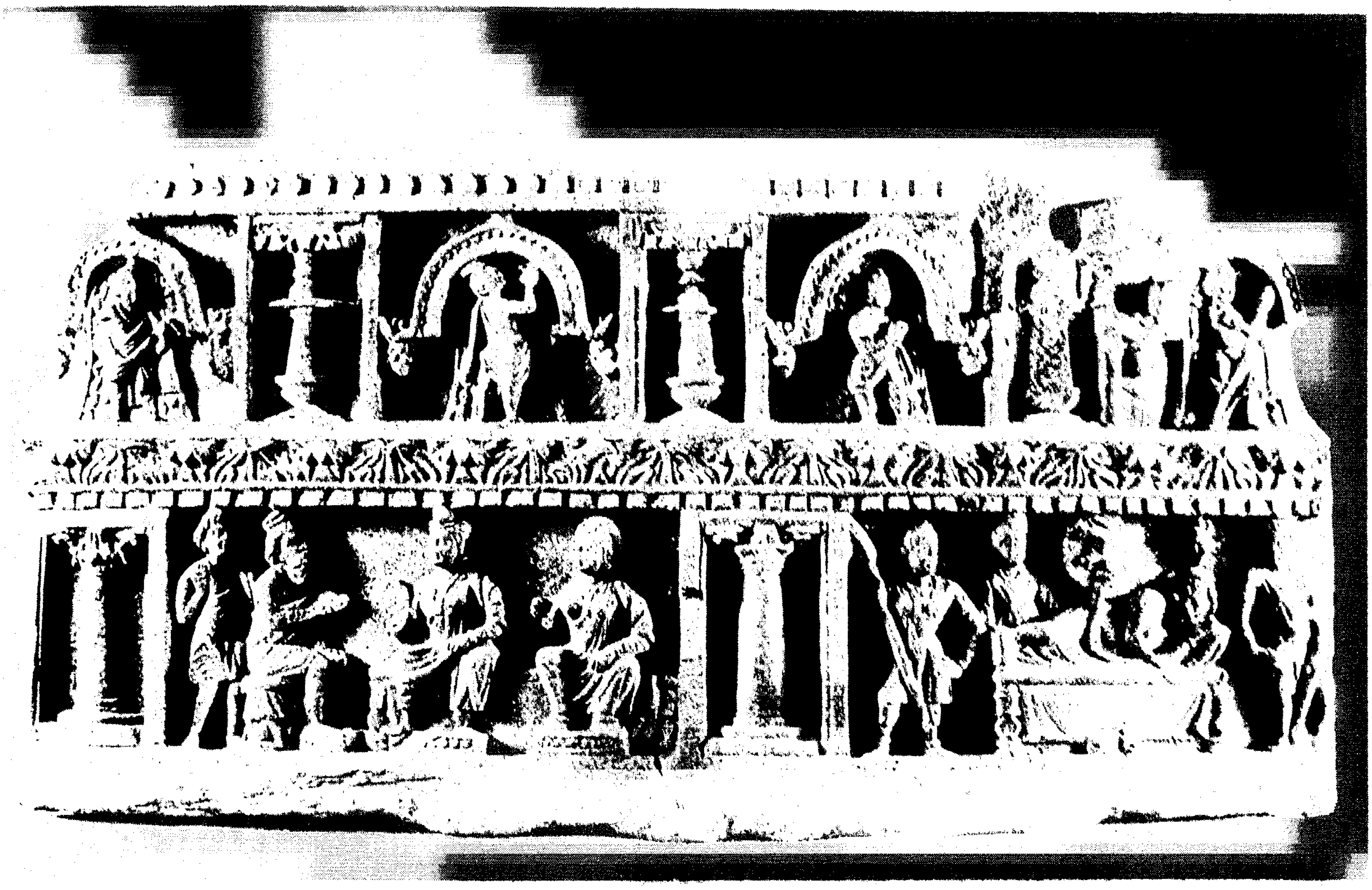
4 Garland with garland-bearers
Stone

5 Relief of garland bearers
3rd-4th century A.D., Gandhara
Stone
Present location unknown.
Photo, Horst Schastok

6 The Dream of Maya, interpretation of the dream
Stone

stupa-*vihara* complex (the centre of worship and monastic establishments of the Buddhist order). Buddhism travelled to Gandhara with the proselytising missions of Emperor Ashoka, in the third century B.C. The religion took deep root, and by the end of the first century A.D., Gandhara had become one of the major areas of Buddhist thought and practice. Many places in Gandhara were associated with Buddhist legends, and with events in the life of the Buddha. Innumerable monasteries were founded, and Gandhara became a seminal region in the growth and dissemination of Buddhism both in India and along the caravan routes of Central Asia.

It was in the second century B.C., not long after the first Buddhist missions, that the Greek kings swept into the Kabul valley from their stronghold in ancient Bactria. This kingdom, a legacy of the Eastern conquests of Alexander, lay north of the Hindu Kush, comprising what is now northern Afghanistan and, though this is disputed, Soviet Central Asia. These kings ruled Gandhara for over a century. Till quite recently, there was virtually no other evidence in Gandhara or Bactria to suggest the existence of a

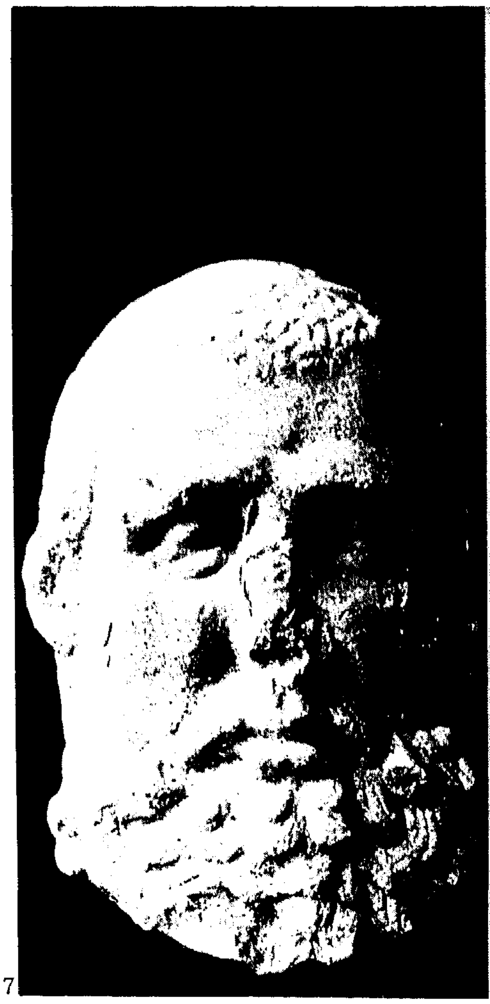


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Hellenistic civilisation in these regions, apart from a rich series of Greek and Indo-Greek coins. Furthermore, most of the Gandharan sculptures were known to be carved during the time of the Kushana kings who had flourished in the second-third centuries A.D., long after the political collapse of the Greeks both in Gandhara and Bactria. This gave rise to one of the oldest problems in Gandharan studies—the origins of Western Classical elements in Gandharan sculpture, whether the source was Hellenistic Bactria, or a Roman infiltration which occurred two hundred years later. The great pioneer of Gandharan studies, Alfred Foucher, suggested that the foundations of Hellenism in Gandhara were already laid during the Indo-Greek period (second century B.C.), and that the Gandharan sculptures reflected a cultural continuation long after the political end of Greek rule in the region.[1] Others, principally Sir Mortimer Wheeler, believed that Western Classical traditions did not reach Gandhara till much later—not before Roman trade began to pass through Gandhara on its way to China, in the first-second centuries A.D.[2] This debate went on for almost three quarters of

a century.

A fairly recent discovery in Bactria, however, has settled some of these issues and supports Alfred Foucher's hypothesis. A fully developed Hellenistic town has been unearthed at Ai-Khanoum, in north-eastern Afghanistan, on the banks of the Oxus. It is complete with an acropolis, temple, mausoleum, gymnasium, stadium, theatre, together with several sculptures in stone,
Figs. 7, 8 stucco, clay and bronze—all clearly Hellenistic in concept, style and technique.[3] Ai-Khanoum flourished for almost two hundred years under the Seleucid and Bactrian Greeks, after it was founded at the close of the fourth or beginning of the third century B.C. There is no reason not to assume that these traditions travelled to Gandhara in the second century B.C. with the Bactrians and the Indo-Greeks. Unfortunately, not very much has survived in Gandhara of the years of Greek rule, apart from the coins, despite more recent excavations. A Greek temple has been found in Jandial in Taxila, one of the old capitals of Gandhara, but it is not certain that it was built during the time of the Greek kings. However, some of the terracotta figures made

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7 Head of a man
Ai-Khanoum
Stucco

8 Fragment of a foot
Ai-Khanoum
Stone

9 Statuette of Cupid
Shaikhan-Dheri
Terracotta

10 Sleeping Maenad
Begram, Afghanistan
Plaster, d. 17 cm
Collection: Kabul Museum
Courtesy, Hallade M., *Gandharan Art of North India and the Graeco-Buddhist Tradition in India, Persia, and Central Asia*

in Gandhara during the Greek period (although few in number) clearly
Fig. 9 indicate an extension of Bactrian Hellenism.[4]

Though Hellenistic Bactria was probably the original source of Western traditions in Gandhara, it was not the only one. The philhellene preoccupation of the Parthians, who came from Iran and occupied Gandhara sometime between the first century B.C. and the first century A.D., helped maintain these traditions. Thereafter, the Roman presence in Gandhara, from the first century A.D. onwards, which stemmed from the growing trade between Rome and China and in which the Gandhara region was a focal point, was no less effective than Hellenistic Bactria as a carrier of Western norms. Apart from the eloquent testimony of the Begram hoard, discovered in the Kabul valley, with its rich assortment of luxury items from
Fig. 10 Rome and India[5], some Gandharan sculptures can be clearly allied to Roman—as distinct from Hellenistic—prototypes. It would appear that while Hellenistic Bactria represented an early and major source of Western influence in Gandhara, the later Roman influx served as a reinforcing



11 Stair-riser
Late 1st or early 2nd century A.D., Gandhara
Buner near Swat
Schist
Collection: Victoria and Albert Museum, London
By Courtesy of the Trustees of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London; Photo, Robert Skelton

12 Fragment of a relief scene depicting the *Parinirvana* or passing of the Buddha
2nd-4th century A.D., Gandhara
Schist, l. 122 cm
Collection: Victoria and Albert Museum, London
By Courtesy of the Trustees of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London







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influence, which carried the Gandharan style along a general direction already set by the Bactrian contact.

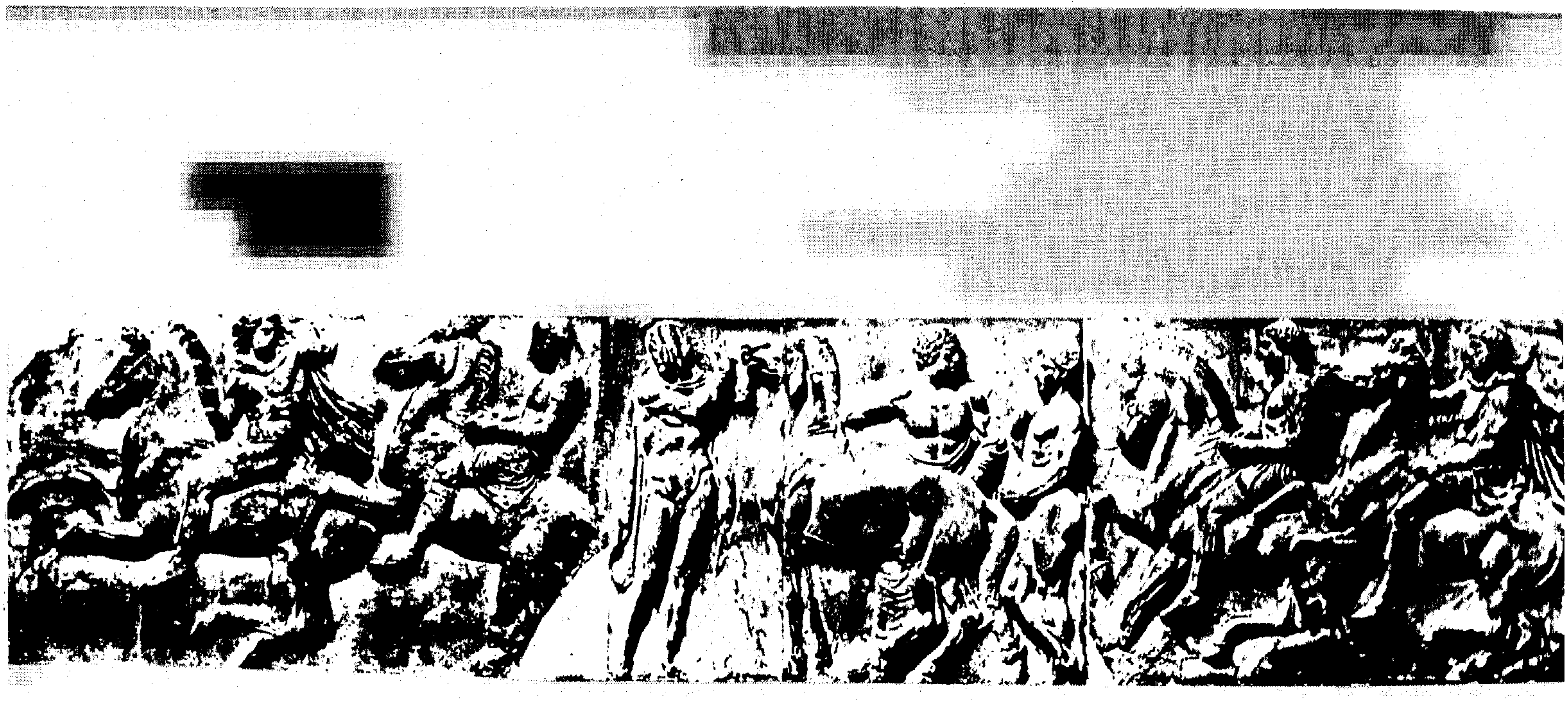
The Hellenistic infiltration into Gandhara from Bactria, later sustained by Parthian and Roman contact, led to one of the most interesting fusions in the history of Eastern and Western culture. This is best exemplified perhaps in the *Milinda Panha,* a text of the second century B.C., which relates the discussions between the Greek king, Menander, and the Buddhist sage-philosopher, Nagasena. The *Milinda Panha* embodies a process of cultural intermixture which continued in Gandhara for almost a millennium. The bulk of the Gandharan sculptures, carved at least two centuries after the *Milinda Panha,* was a part of the same process.

The period of Greek domination in Gandhara gave way to several incoming waves of different peoples who ruled the region in fairly quick succession. Towards the beginning of the first century B.C., the last of the Indo-Greek kings was ousted by the invasions of the nomadic Shakas from Central Asia; the Shakas in turn were overthrown by the Parthians. The

13 Parthenon frieze
Collection: The British Museum, London
Reproduced by Courtesy of the Trustees of The British Museum, London

14 Life in the Palace, the Great Departure
Stone
Collection & Courtesy, Lahore Museum

15 The Muchilinda Episode, offering of the Four Bowls by the *Lokapalas* or Guardians of the World, Merchants Trapusha and Bhallika passing through Uruvilva
Sanchi



13

Kushanas occupied Gandhara in the middle of the first century A.D. Originally a nomadic people from Central Asia, they were settled in Bactria for about a century before entering the Kabul valley. Kushana rule, and the expansion of the Kushana empire, initiated a period of relative political stability, which lasted till the overthrow of the dynasty by the Sassanians, who came from Iran, in the middle of the third century. The Kushana period was also a time of economic prosperity, benefitting greatly from the trade between Rome and China which passed through the Kushana territories. In the fifth century, the invasion of the white Huns from Central Asia led to a widespread devastation of Buddhist establishments, and thus to the virtual eclipse of the Gandharan school of art. It survived thereafter in only a few isolated areas.

Thus Gandharan sculpture represents a more complex intermixture than just Graeco-Roman with Indian Buddhist norms. Over the centuries, the Gandharan region, situated at the crossroads of East and West, absorbed different cultural streams—Hellenistic-Roman, Parthian, Shaka-Kushana

and Indian—into its sculptural tradition. This cultural intermingling was the most salient characteristic of Gandharan sculpture. It is not surprising, therefore, that the number of sculptures which closely approximate a particular stylistic tradition, such as Western, Indian or Parthian, are remarkably few when compared with the thousands of Gandharan sculptures which were produced. In the majority of Gandharan sculptures, Western, Indian, Parthian and Shaka-Kushana elements appear in a much more diffused manner as a result of being mixed with each other. This amalgamation of styles places Gandhara slightly outside the orbit of the indigenous traditions of early India. Even though Gandhara was traditionally included within the geographical limits of early India, and Gandharan sculpture is basically Buddhist (permeated as much by Indian as by other sculptural norms), its treatment generally represents a distinct divergence from early Indian traditions. Gandhara can in many ways be regarded as an outpost of Indian culture, just as it was an outpost of the Western Classical world.

As the intent of most of the sculptures is narrative, and insofar as a story



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takes place in time and space, and generally deals with human characters, the comparisons with Graeco-Roman sculpture which now follow focus the narrative treatment of time, space and the human form. Hellenistic Bactria has not yielded any narrative reliefs, to my knowledge; thus it is necessary to turn to the homelands of the Western Classical tradition around the Mediterranean.

The Concept of Time

It seems appropriate to begin with the famous Parthenon frieze, a formulated point in the narrative art of Classical Greece. It depicts the Panathenaic procession, one of the most important religious festivals of Athens. The procession is shown as a chronological sequence of separate incidents—each distilled into a single moment. The use of space between each scene expresses the isolation of one moment from the next. The division of time into separate arrested moments, and the movement of time as a linear progression of these moments, represents the basis of the Greek narrative *Fig. 13*

vision. The Parthenon frieze epitomises the conceptual and artistic values which dominated the narrative art of the Graeco-Roman world for almost a millennium. The reliefs of the Hellenistic and Roman periods developed their individual characteristics, but the underlying narrative concept does not seem to have altered in any fundamental way from its formulation in Classical Greece.[6]

The majority of the Gandharan reliefs appear to be adaptations of this narrative mode. The life of the Buddha is conceived, essentially, as a chronological sequence of separate incidents or stories, with each story distilled into a single moment, and the Buddha life-cycle is visualised as a linear progression of these arrested moments, separated from each other by artistic devices such as Corinthian pilasters, often framed in rectangular niches.[7] The reliefs were presumably once arranged in linear sequence, placed either horizontally, to cover perhaps the body of the stupa drum, or vertically, on gables and uprights at other points of the stupa complex. *Figs. 6, 14*

It is possible to seek the antecedents of the Gandharan narratives in the

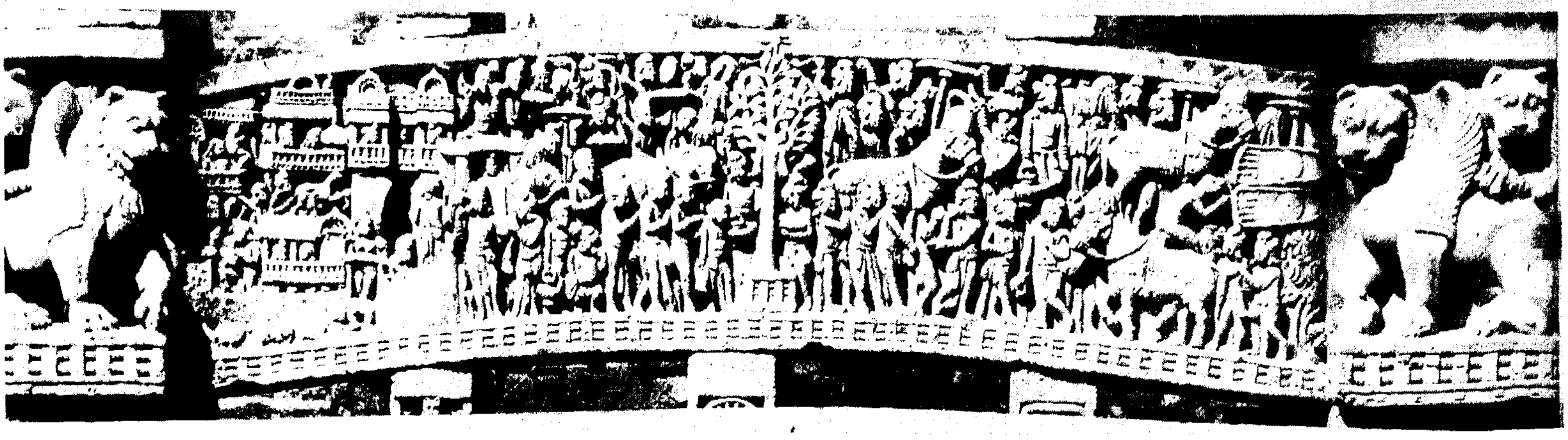
16 Shyama *jataka*
Jamal-garhi
Stone
Collection: The British Museum, London
Reproduced by Courtesy of the Trustees of The British Museum, London

17 The Great Departure
Sanchi

18 Religious Rites or Sacrificial Meal: Stair-riser from a Buddhist Monastery
1st-2nd century A.D., Gandhara, Buner
Steatite, h. 16.51 cm. l. 43.18 cm
Collection & Courtesy: The Cleveland Museum of Art, Dudley P. Allen Fund



16



17

early Indian sculptured pillars of Bharhut or Sanchi, frequently divided into three or four panels, ranged one above the other, each depicting a story from the Buddha's life. But in the Indian examples the panels are rarely arranged in chronological order. It is the linear and sequential treatment of narrative that Gandhara adopted from the Western manner which represents the essential difference between the Gandharan and indigenous Indian norms of narration. In fact, the departure from the indigenous Indian concept of time is particularly evident in the rare instances at Gandhara when the method of continuous narrative is used and the story unfolds over several incidents. Unlike the Indian treatment, wherein the incidents of a story merge into each other without interruption or strict chronology, the Gandharan reliefs reflect a sequential and highly devisive notion of time. *Fig. 15*; *Figs. 16, 17*

Distribution of Space

Western inspiration again can be seen quite clearly in the treatment of space in two groups of reliefs. The first is the so-called Buner series,

reminiscent of Classical Greek and Hellenistic compositions. The second *Fig. 18* group of reliefs suggests Roman sources. The dramatic restlessness in some *Parinirvana* (the Great Decease of the Buddha) panels is very similar to the dramatic depictions of many Roman sarcophagi. A dominant play of light *Figs. 20, 21* and shade is created by deep carving and crowded compositions. But interestingly, despite the variation in the way the heads and torsos have been directed, an even spacing in the Gandharan examples ensures that the figures are set in fairly well-defined rows, one above the other, thus infusing a schematism which refracts the changed movement of the composition.[8] Examples of both groups of reliefs are very few.

Spatial Depth

The Greek concept of reality as idealised perfection required, in the arts, a corresponding perfection in the rendering of the physical world so as to mirror the ideal more closely. The depiction of nature, therefore, entailed the most precise and accurate presentation of natural detail. Thus the



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expression of Greek idealism in art was rooted firmly in physical detail. However, the perfecting or idealising of each natural detail removed it, to that extent, from the particularities of the natural world. The realistic detail, which passed through an idealising filter, inevitably acquired a generalised quality. In fact, the particular tension of the Greek sculptural style exists precisely in this polarity between idealised and realistic physical detail. The accurate depiction of the physical world demanded a rendering of its three-dimensional reality. This involved the rendering of spatial depth, dependent upon the visual laws of perspective. These laws were clearly already mastered by the time the Parthenon frieze was carved. The subtle use of planes, foreshortening and the three-quarter view to convey spatial depth in the grouping of the figures, indicates a practised understanding of the adjustments required for the translation of free-standing forms into relief sculpture.[9] *Fig. 13*

Many figures in the Gandharan reliefs are depicted according to Western notions of spatial perspective. The three-quarter stance, for instance, is used

frequently. But it is rarely rendered with the realistic accuracy of Western examples. The realism is diluted not only by a diminished understanding of the techniques required for accurate presentation, but also because these figures are invariably juxtaposed with others conceived according to Indian and Parthian norms, and which do not share the same concern for realism.

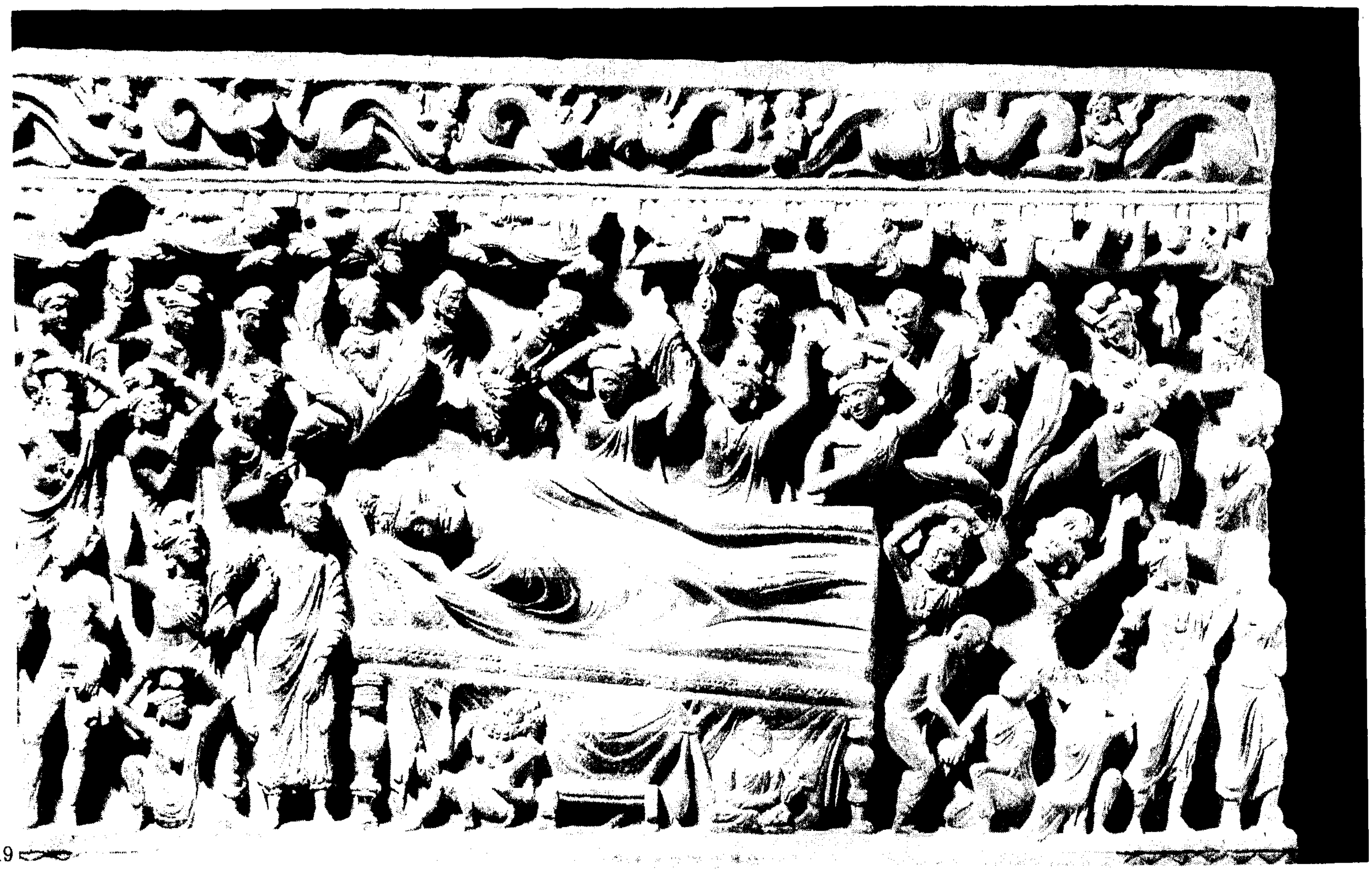
In some depictions of the Great Departure (when the Buddha-to-be leaves his palace home in his search for truth), the Bodhisattva emerges on
Fig. 21 horseback, full face, from the city gates. Chandaka, his faithful groom, posed with a bold spiral twist of the torso, holds the royal umbrella over the Master, his head tilted sharply upwards in three-quarter view, as he looks at the Bodhisattva. The composition reflects an obvious acquaintance with the laws of perspective. But the obtrusive frontality, presumably Parthian, of some of the subsidiary figures, presents an intrinsic negation of these laws. The conflicting ways of depicting spatial depth lead to the diffusion of its expression. Frequently, the subsidiary figures are ranged one above the other with a total disregard for three-dimensional realism, following a
Fig. 22 characteristic of the Indian norm.

19 ***Mahaparinirvana***
Loriyan Tangai
Stone
Collection & Courtesy, Indian Museum, Calcutta

20 Battle sarcophagus from the Via Tiburtina
2nd century A.D.
Stone
Collection & Courtesy, Museo Nazionale Romano, Rome

21 The Great Departure (detail)
Stone
Collection & Courtesy, Lahore Museum

22 The Great Departure
Swat (Butkara I)
Stone



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The Concept of the Human Form

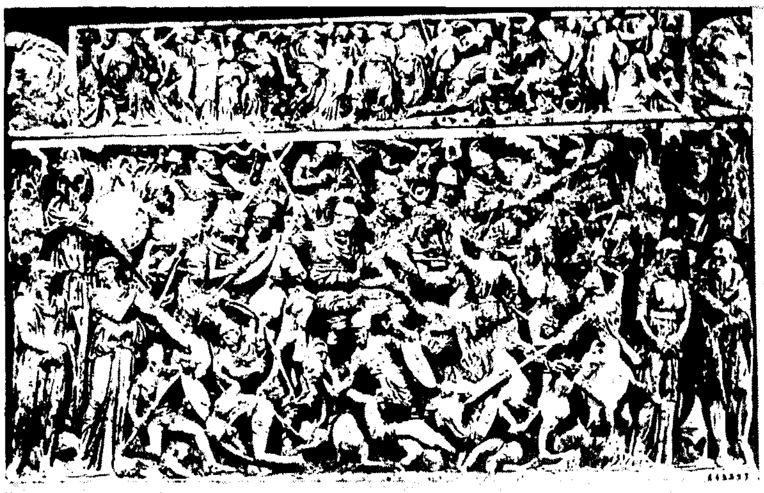
The realistic style which, broadly speaking, characterises the Classical Greek, Hellenistic and Roman traditions, was based upon the Greek notion of measure: only by the division of the physical world into measurable units could the precision of natural detail be achieved. It is presumably this same preoccupation with measurable units which underlines the Greek perception of time as a sequence of divided, and hence, measurable moments.

In the words of the famous Greek philosopher, Polyclitus, the twin notions of division and measure are summed up in connection with precise rendering of the human form: "Beauty consists in the proportion not of the elements but of the parts, that is to say, of finger to finger, and of all the fingers to the palm, and of these to the forearm, and of the forearm to the upper arm, and of all parts to each other."[10] It is in terms of the precisely divided and measured human form that the isolated and measured moment

is arrested; the particular moment caught in the particularities of anatomical detail: the tension of arrest embodied in the taut precision of anatomical rendering. Thus the arrest of the moment, the fundamental concept of the Graeco-Roman narrative tradition, was inextricably dependent upon the precise representation of the human form.

The narrative moment in Western reliefs ranges between the two extremes of the dramatic moment and the moment of repose. The dramatic moment lends itself more easily to the expression of arrested time, caught readily in exaggerated stances and the distortion of facial features which generally accompany heightened emotion. The centaurs on the Parthenon metopes[11] are early examples of the representation of dramatic events which, in the Hellenistic period, reach an emotional crescendo. The frieze on the Pergamon Altar is unrelieved in its dramatic charge, carried by convoluted torsos and facial features contorted in extreme emotion. The *Fig. 24* battle scenes depicted on many Roman sarcophagi are a continuation of the same tradition.[12]

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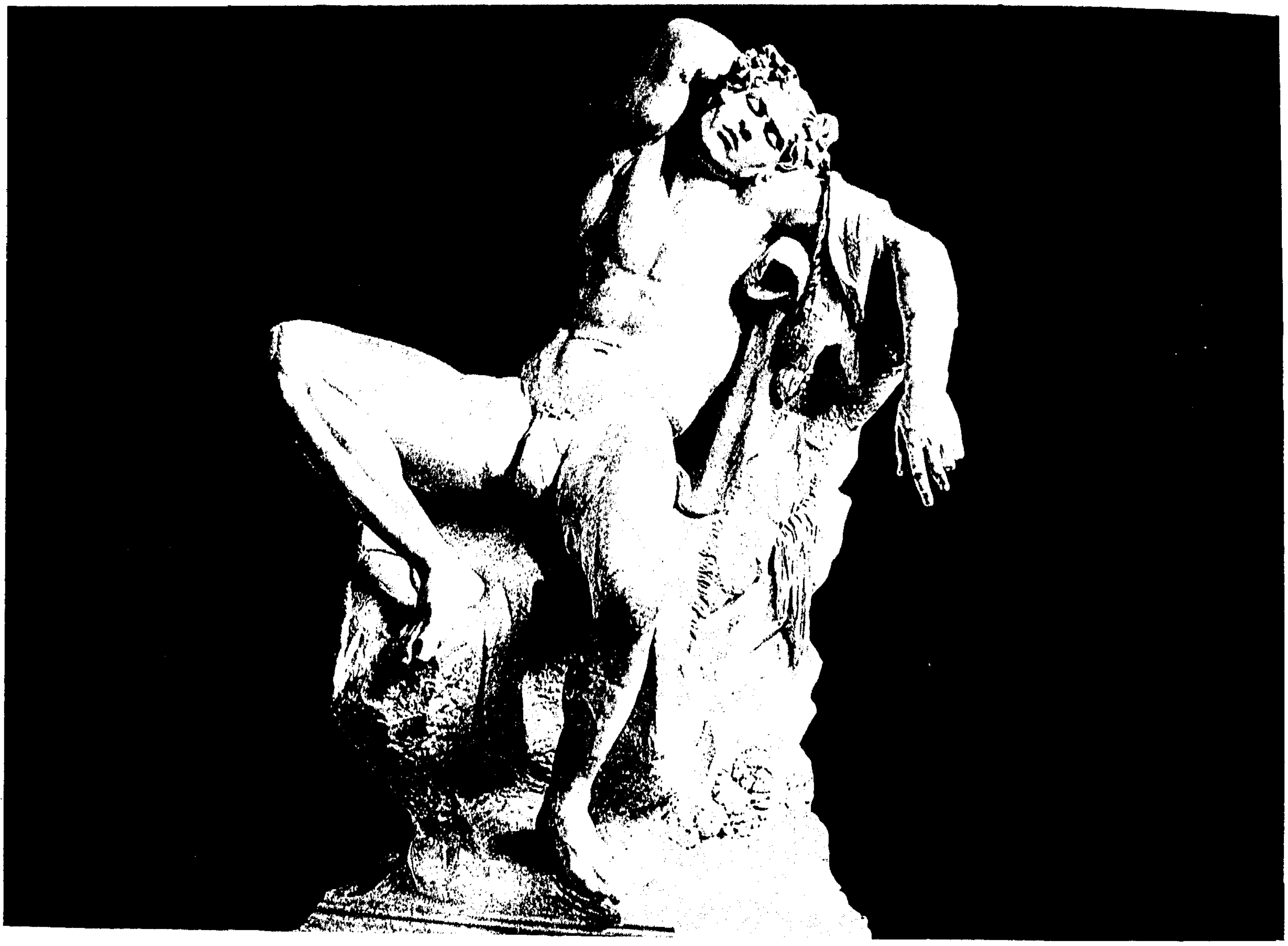
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It is interesting that even moments of repose in Hellenistic sculpture embody the same urgency as the more dramatic depictions. The Sleeping Maenad or the Barberini Faun convey the taut intensity of a captured moment rather than the relaxation which would seem to accompany sleep. *Figs. 10,* The expression of repose in Classical Greek reliefs is less charged, although *23* Attic gravestones are no less precise in capturing the mood or ambience of a particular moment.[13] Representations of repose cannot perhaps resort to the exaggeration of facial features or of stance—more easily associated with dramatic events—but rely equally upon realistic anatomical presentation to capture a precise moment.

Gandharan sculpture is permeated by the Western realistic treatment of the human form. Several sculptures in stucco, terracotta and clay are very close to Western prototypes. The figures in the Buner series reflect an *Figs. 25,* obvious familiarity with the intricacies of human anatomy, and several *26* scholars have suggested that the panels were made by Western craftsmen. Many of the figures in these reliefs stand in *dehanchement* (a characteristic



23



24

23 Barberini Faun
Glytothek, Munich

24 Zeus and three Giants: frieze on the Great Altar of Zeus (detail)
Pergamon
Collection & Courtesy, Pergamon Museum, East Berlin

25 Head of a youth
Taxila, Punjab
Terracotta

26 Head of Vajrapani
Tepe-Shutur, Hadda
Clay

Western stance, in which the weight of the body is carried on one leg, while the other is slightly flexed) and are sometimes clad in Greek dress. Some images of the Buddha, such as the famous figure from Hoti-Mardhan, are also strikingly close to Western prototypes, and provided the principal examples in the argument for a Greek origin of the Buddha image.[14] The realistic treatment of facial features and drapery, as well as the *dehanchement,* point undoubtedly to Western sources. Another group of reliefs, from Jamal-Garhi, are reminiscent of Roman compositions. The wide range of stances in these reliefs frequently includes fairly convoluted poses, and reflect a clear mastery in the sculpting of the human torso. Among the stances is that of a nude man in *dehanchement,* with his back to the spectator, his head thrown back dramatically and carved in three-quarter view.[15] The figure is derived obviously from the Western repertoire and occurs, interestingly, almost as a motif in many Gandharan stories. Chandaka, leading his Master astride on Kanthaka out of the city gates, in representations of the Great Departure, is often conceived in this way. A *Fig. 21*


25


26

seated figure with his head thrown forward between his knees, likewise derives from the West, and seems also to recur through the narratives in the form of a motif.[16]

A stream of portraiture in Gandharan sculptures also draws on Western inspiration. The individualised treatment of facial features in a head from Sahri-Bahlol, or a head of a man formerly in the Haughton collection, leaves little doubt that these were conceived as portraits. The realism of the rendering and the absence of idealising elements suggest Roman rather than Hellenistic sources. Individualised faces recur through the reliefs also. *cf. 28, 29*

However, reliefs such as the Buner series or the Jamal-Garhi group, or images such as the Hoti-Mardhan Buddha, in which the representation of the human form approximates the precision of the Western style, are very few in number when compared with the thousands of sculptures which were produced in Gandhara. Examples of portraiture also are not abundant.

For the most part, although a realistic apprehension of the human form permeates Gandharan sculpture, the Western fidelity to natural detail is

considerably diminished. The figures have, by and large, lost their anatomical precision. Details of torso and facial features appear, instead, as diffused echoes of the parent style.

With the diffusion of precise anatomical rendering, the Gandharan narratives lost, inevitably, the tension of the arrested moment. In some representations of the Great Departure, the figures are shown in exaggerated stances to convey the dramatic nature of the event. Similarly, the *Parinirvana* is conceived as the moment of dramatic despair which seizes the disciples and devotees of the Buddha upon his death, expressed through arms flung upward in grief and faces contorted in sorrow or buried in a cloth to hide the tears. In a panel in the Victoria and Albert Museum, the stillness of the recumbent Buddha heightens, by contrast, the moment of dramatic chaos which surrounds it, as does the still figure of Subhadra seated in *Fig. 31* meditation in front of the Buddha's couch. These reliefs may depict the dramatic moment of the Great Departure of the Buddha's Death, but the lack of anatomical precision dissipates the tension of arrested time. In

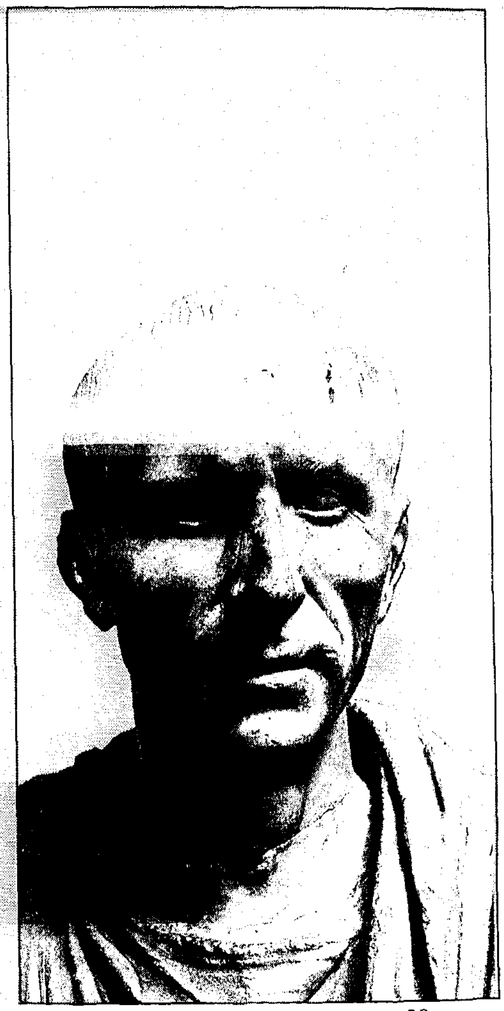
27 Standing image of the Buddha
Formerly in the Guides' Mess, Mardan

28 Portrait head of a man
Sahri-Bahlol
Stone
Collection & Courtesy, Peshawar Museum

29 Head of a Roman of the early Empire
Bronze
Collection & Courtesy, Palazzo Barberini, Rome


27


28


29

representations of the palace women, asleep in a drunken stupour on the eve of the Great Departure, the arrest of a moment of repose is diffused in a *Fig. 30* similar way.

The diffusion of the arrested moment is not entirely due to a loss of anatomical precision in carving. Realistically conceived figures in the Gandharan narratives are almost invariably juxtaposed with those conceived according to other norms, such as the Indian and the Parthian, and which are treated, therefore, in the generalised and conventionalised manner of their respective traditions. Thus Vajrapani, the constant companion of the Buddha, conceived in Gandhara in the form of Heracles, appears frequently beside the figures carved in a generalised style. Similarly, Chandaka, often shown as a nude male from the Western repertoire, or the dramatic head-on appearance of the Bodhisattva on Kanthaka out of the city gates, can be flanked by *Fig. 21* figures which stand with the iconic immobility of the Parthian aesthetic.

The diffusion of the arrested moment in the Gandharan narratives rests primarily upon twin factors: firstly, of reduced anatomical precision and

30 The Great Renunciation
Takht-i-Bahi
Stone
Collection: The British Museum, London
Reproduced by Courtesy of the Trustees of The British Museum, London

31 *Mahaparinirvana*
Stone
Collection: Victoria and Albert Museum, London
By Courtesy of the Trustees of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London


30


31

secondly, the weaker treatment of the laws of spatial perspective. It is interesting that it is essentially upon these same factors, the accurate rendering of anatomy and spatial depth, that the realistic style of the West hinges. The dilution of these two elements in narrative composition, therefore, is the mainspring of the Gandharan divergence from the Western tradition, its movement away, at once, from the Western realistic style and the moment of arrest which depends upon this style.

Concluding Remarks

While there can be little doubt about the allegiance of the majority of the Gandharan narratives to the temporal perceptions of the West, it is more problematic to assign the treatment of space in Gandharan reliefs to any single tradition. Only in a handful of reliefs does the distribution of space clearly recall Classical Greek and Hellenistic compositions; and in most of those which can be allied to Roman examples, the frequently schematised treatment in Gandhara reduces the charge of the moment in the compositions. For the rest, although certain details can be attributed to Western sources, the intrusion of elements deriving from very different spatial apprehensions, such as the Indian and Parthian, creates a very mixed expression. The Gandharan treatment of the human form, in narrative reliefs as well as in sculptures of the Buddhas and Bodhisàttva, provides relatively few examples which are close to Western realism. Most of the figures reflect a dilution of that reality which results both from a loss of anatomical accuracy in the carving, as well as from the juxtaposition in the reliefs of the figures treated according to different norms—Western, Parthian and Indian. Thus, despite a widespread indebtedness of Gandharan sculpture to the Graeco-Roman tradition, remarkably few Gandharan sculptures approximate the realism of the Western style.

Furthermore, while it is thoroughly evident that Gandhara drew upon a wide range of stylistic traditions, the bulk of the Gandharan sculptures is characterised by a style which belongs to none of the parent traditions. The sculptures are a distinctive Gandharan creation, their style recognisable as an independent language. It was the working of a local Gandharan imagination which not only gives the Gandharan sculptures their particular stamp, but which allows them to be so clearly distinguished from the other sculptural traditions of the East, spread over the broad area extending from the Euphrates to the Ganges and Jamuna valley, which shared the common legacy of Hellenism following upon the conquests of Alexander.[17]

It is within the context of the Hellenisation of the East that Gandhara assumes its widest perspective. The burning of Persepolis, in 330 B.C., by Alexander, signalled a major watershed in Asian history and led to a disruption of the ancient indigenous traditions of the East which was to persist for centuries. Alexander's Eastern empire may have collapsed within two hundred years of his death, but the cultural impress of Hellenism lingered in these regions for nearly a millennium. As one of the farthest reaches of Hellenism, as well as the cultural and religious traditions of the Indian subcontinent, Gandhara lay at the crossroads of East and West. This polarity represents the essential character of the Gandharan situation, affecting inevitably the development of its sculptural forms.

A series of recent excavations have revealed not only the depth of Hellenistic penetration in many of the Eastern regions, but more significantly, the intermingling between Hellenism and the different pre-existing traditions. The process of cultural interaction differed widely from region to region, depending largely upon the nature of the indigenous norms. It was the working of local cultural and artistic tendencies which created the wide range of stylistic expressions that can be seen between the Euphrates and the valleys of northern India. That broad land mass may have shared a common theme of Hellenisation but the variations within that theme were no less significant, as regional modes of expression combined inextricably with the differing levels of absorption of Hellenistic norms.

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3 For accounts of the excavations see reports by P. Bernard in *Comptes rendus des seances de l'Academie des Inscriptions et Belles-lettres,* 1966 onwards. Also Bernard, *Fouilles d'Al Khanoum I,* Paris 1973; Guillaume, O.; *Fouilles d'Al Khanoum II,* Paris, 1983; Francfort H-P *Fouilles d'Al Khanoum III,* Paris 1984

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5 Hackin, J. and Madame J. R. Hackin; *Recherches archeologiques a Begram;* Paris 1939. Hackin and others; *Nouvelles recherches archeologiques a Begram;* Paris 1954

6 Exceptions to this tradition include the Telephus frieze: (Bieber, M.; *The Sculpture of the Hellenistic Age;* New York 1961 (2nd ed.); Figs. 477, 478 and the Roman continuous narratives on the columns of Trajan and Marcus Aurelius: Strong, D.; *Roman Art;* London 1976; Pls. 79-87, 141-48

7 A few Gandharan reliefs recall examples of Roman continuous narration—Ackerman, H.C.; *Narrative Stone Reliefs from Gandhara in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London;* Rome 1975; Pl. XXXV and p. 99f. Foucher; *op. cit.;* Vol. I; Fig. 257

8 Stone reliefs in Gandhara akin to Roman compositions are less schematic—see Ingholt, H.; *Gandharan Art of Pakistan;* New York 1957; Figs. 116, 119

9 Richter, G. M. A.; *The Sculpture and Sculptors of the Greeks;* New Haven and London 1970 (4th ed.); pp. 80-9. Richter, G. M. A.; *Perspective in Greek and Roman Art;* London and New York 1970; pp. 30-8

10 Bowra, C. M.; *The Greek Experience;* London 1957; p. 158f

11 Boardman, J.; *Greek Art;* London 1973 (rev. ed.); illus. 111, 122

12 Richter; *Perspective;* 1970; Fig. 225. Strong; *op. cit.;* Pls. 139, 140

13 Boardman; *op. cit.;* illus, 116, 138

14 Foucher; 'L', Origin greque de l'image du Bouddha'; *Annales du Musee Guimet, Bibliotheque de vulgarisation;* Tome. XXXVIII; 1913; pp. 231-72. Whether Gandhara or Mathura first produced in the image of the Buddha is an old debate; more recently J. E. van Lohuizen de Leew has argued for the earlier appearance of the image at Mathura—'New Evidence with regard to the origin of the Buddha Image'; *South Asian Archaeology 1979;* ed. by H. Hartel; Berlin 1981; pp. 377-400

15 Ingholt; *op. cit.;* Figs. 112, 116

16 Marshall; *The Buddhist Art of Gandhara;* Cambridge 1960; Fig. 71. Ingholt; *op. cit.;* Figs. 166, 182

17 There is a lot of debate concerning the presence of Ionian Greeks in Iran during the Achaemenid period. For a summary of recent views of the subject see Starr, C. G.; 'Greeks and Persians in the Fourth Century B.C.—A Study in Cultural Contacts before Alexander Part I'; *Iranica Antiqua;* Vol. XI (1957); pp. 39-99; 'Part II—The Meeting of Two Cultures'; *Iranica Antiqua;* Vol. XII (1977); pp. 49-115. For a particularly balanced analysis see Nylander C.; *Ionians in Pasargadae;* Uppsala 1970

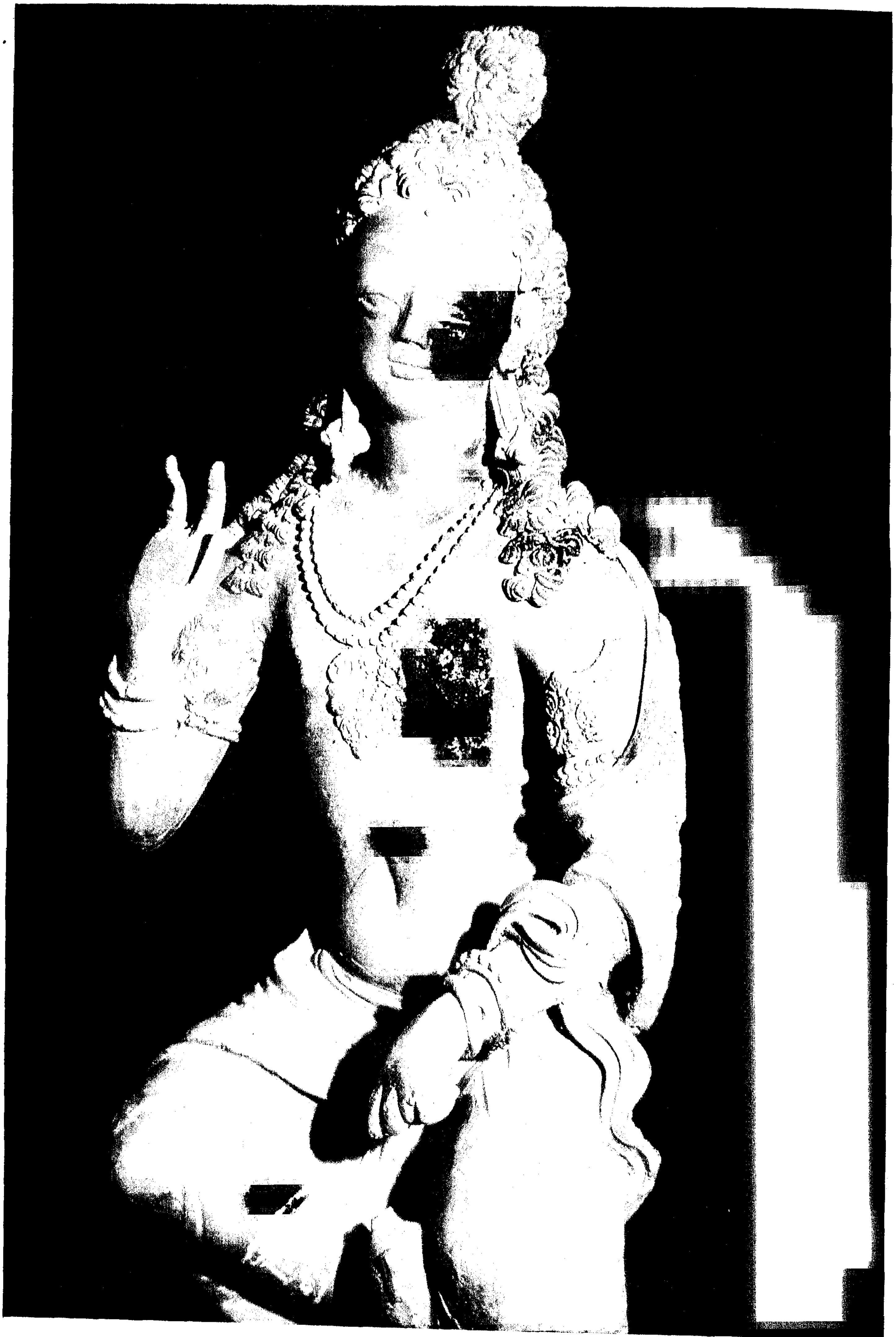
A CULTURAL DIFFUSION

Chhaya Haesner

The Gandhara School represents a current of art that developed in the north-western region of India (now in Pakistan), and in Afghanistan.



1



2

1 Bodhisattva Maitreya
Fondukistan, Afghanistan
Present whereabouts unknown:
Photo, Horst Schastok

2 Bodhisattva
Fondukistan, Afghanistan
Present whereabouts unknown;
Photo, Horst Schastok

3 Map of Central Asia depicting the Silk Routes
Courtesy, Rowland B., *Zentral asien*

4 Helmeted Warrior
Bactrian Cataphracts, Khalchayan
Courtesy, Pugachenkova G. A., *Skultura Khalchayan*

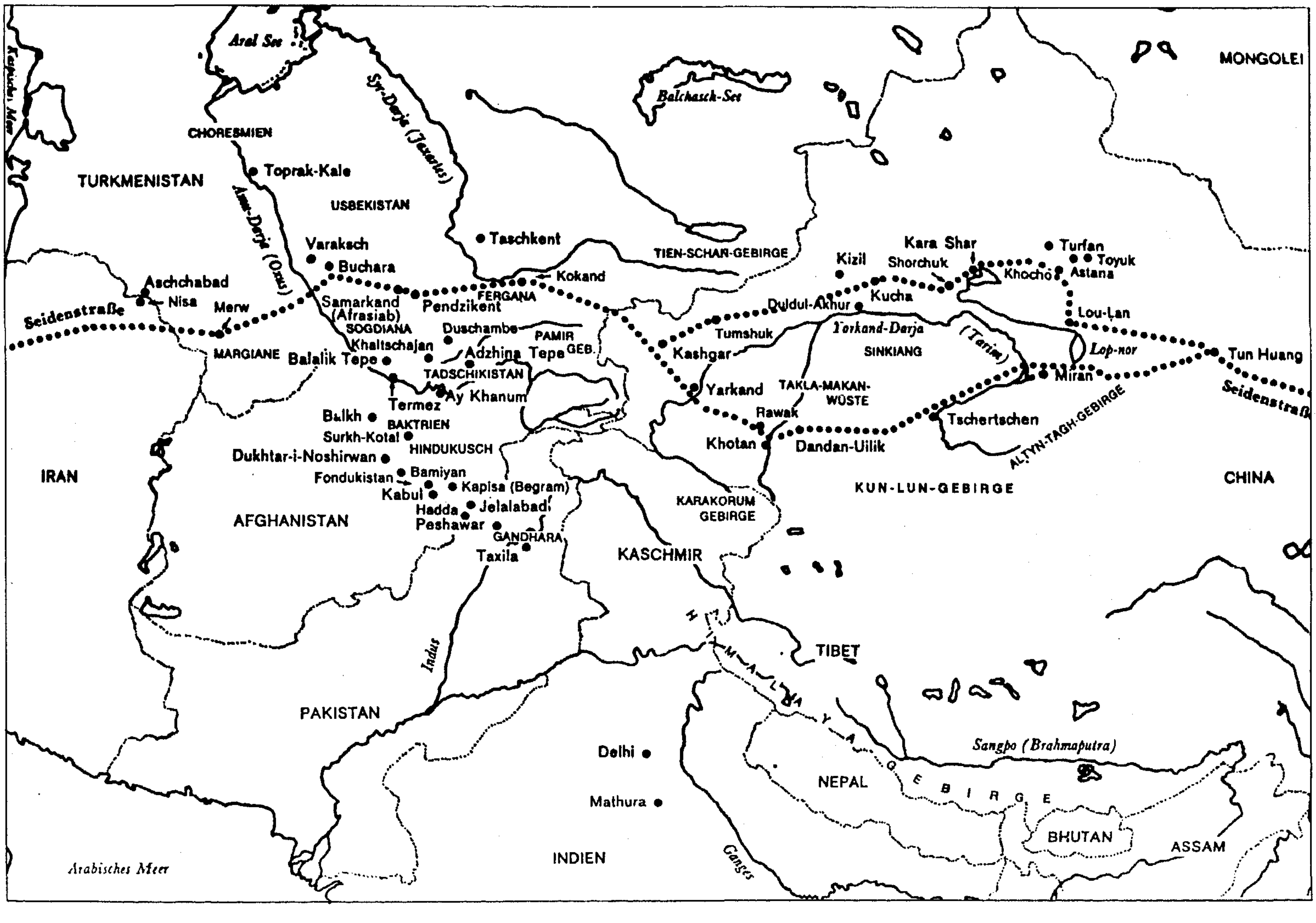
5 Goddess Tyche — Oanindo: Image on Bactrian falar
Embossed silver plaque
Courtesy, Pygachenkova G. A., *Skultura Khalchyan*

6 Buddha Lead
Tumshuk
Collection & Courtesy, Museum fur Indische Kunst, W. Berlin

The art of this region, interestingly, exhibits a close relationship with Greek art. The seed of the amalgamation of Hellenistic and Indian art elements was implanted when Alexander the Great touched the soil of India in 327-26 B.C. He brought with him the great artist Lysippus to India.[1] This style took shape in the first century B.C. and reached its apogee between the second and third centuries A.D. during the time of the Kushana king, Kanishka. It endured for almost eight centuries from the first century B.C. to the sixth-seventh centuries A.D.

The Graeco-Bactrian and Indo-Greek Rulers

After the death of Alexander, Bactria became a Greek colony and turned into a nucleus of Hellenisation in the East. Sometime between 138 and 115 B.C., the Chinese emperor, Han Wu-ti, opened the Silk Route to establish trade contact with the West. By the first century, Chinese silk had already made its way to Egypt via Central Asia,[2] Afghanistan, Persia and, probably, west India. Soon, this region was throbbing with the movements of traders, pilgrims and travellers from different parts of the world. There was exchange of trade as well as of individual ideas and cultural traits. The art activities of this period, from *c.* the second century A.D. to *c.* the tenth-eleventh centuries A.D., reflect the diverse influences that streamed into this region. Bactria remained under the sway of Graeco-Bactrian kings until the coming of the Great Kushanas (first century A.D.). King Euthydemus fortified the Seleucid Satrapy. He was responsible for extending Hellenistic influences and products to the Far East. His son Demetrius annexed the Seleucid provinces of Aria, Arachosia and Seistan in order to gain control over the trade routes by land, between India and the West. He conquered Kapisa and Gandhara, as well as Gedrosia and Paropamisidae, situated in the south of the Hindu Kush. The popular Indo-Greek king, Menander (167-145 B.C.) was noted for his sense of justice. He was also a patron of Buddhism and one of the coins struck by him shows the *dharmachakra* (the Wheel of Law).



3

The Shakas and the Kushanas

By 135 B.C. the Bactrian Greeks were driven out of Bactria by a nomadic tribe of Scythian origin from Central Asia known as the Shakas. With the coming of the Shakas, the power of the Greek rulers was constricted only to the Kabul Valley. However, the Shakas did not rule for long as they were overpowered by the Yueh-chis, popularly known as the Kushanas. The Kushanas belonged to the province of Kansu in north-western China. By 50 A.D. this sedentary tribe ruled the Kabul Valley and Gandhara. Kujula Kadphises, the founder of the Kushana empire, not only captured Gandhara and the Punjab but also established a commercial and political relationship with the Roman empire of Augustus.[3]

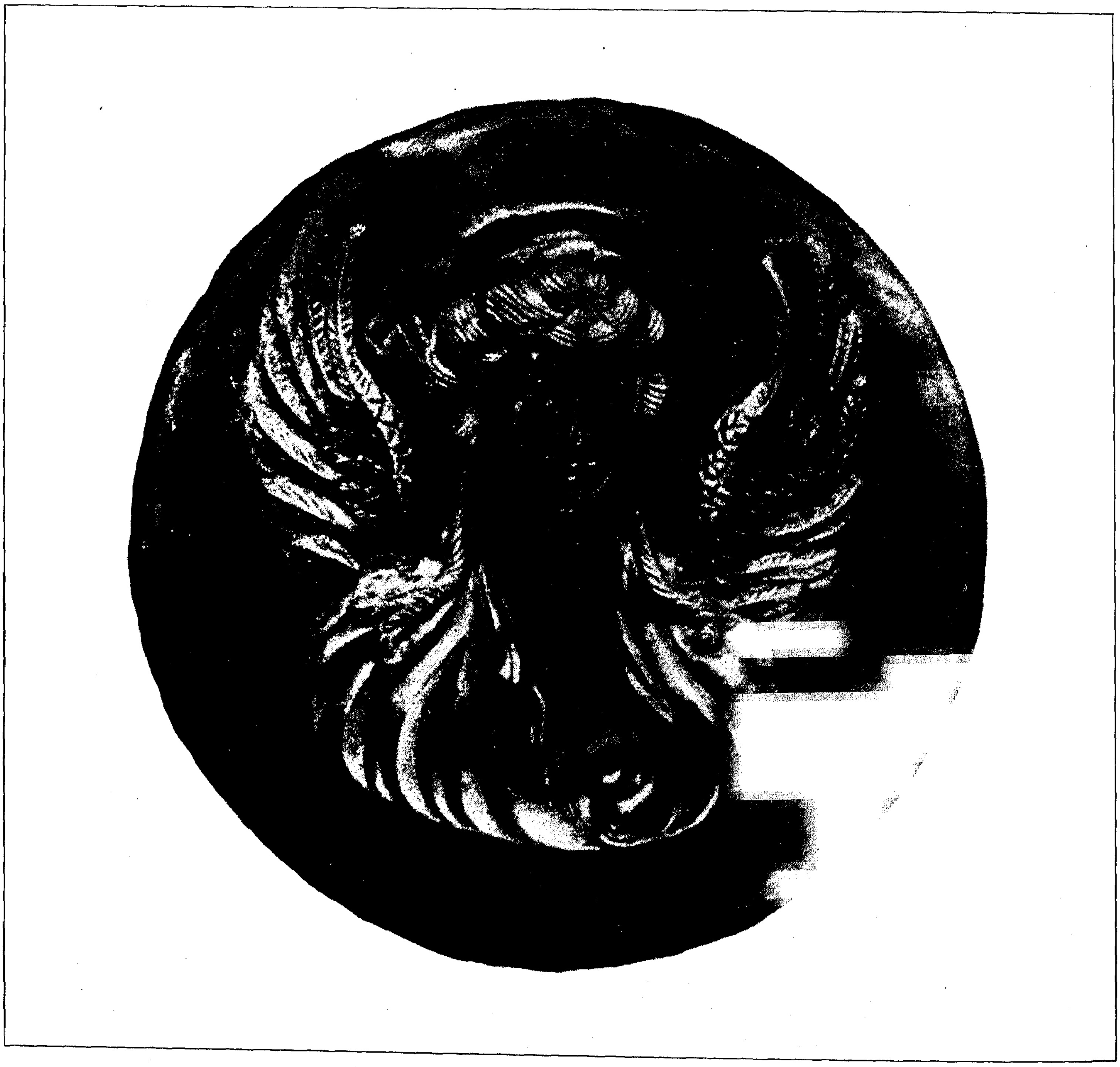
The most important ruler of the Kushana period was Kanishka. His territories extended from Central Asia to Pataliputra. It was during Kanishka's time that Gandhara occupied a distinct place in both the history of politics and in that of culture. It was a period of great prosperity and produced the finest of Gandhara sculptures.



4

Graeco-Bactrian Art

Khalchayan, on the right bank of the Surkhan Darya, near the present-day Denau in Uzbekistan, is situated in the north of Afghanistan. From the third



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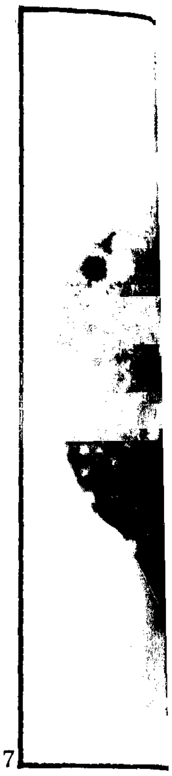
7, 8 Coins of Kanishka
Seated Buddha: copper, Standing Buddha: gold
Collection: The British Museum
Courtesy, Ingholt H., *Gandharan Art in Pakistan*

9 Standing Buddha
2nd-3rd century A.D., Kushana Period, Gandhara Region
Gray schist, h. 20 cm
Collection & Courtesy, The Cleveland Museum of Art, Gift of Morris and Eleanor Everett in memory of Flora Morris Everett

10 Seated Buddha, Offering Bearers (standing male figures)
5th century A.D.; Hadda, Afghanistan
Stucco, h 36.83, 25.40, 27.31 cm
Collection & Courtesy, The Cleveland Museum of Art, Edward L. Whittemore Fund

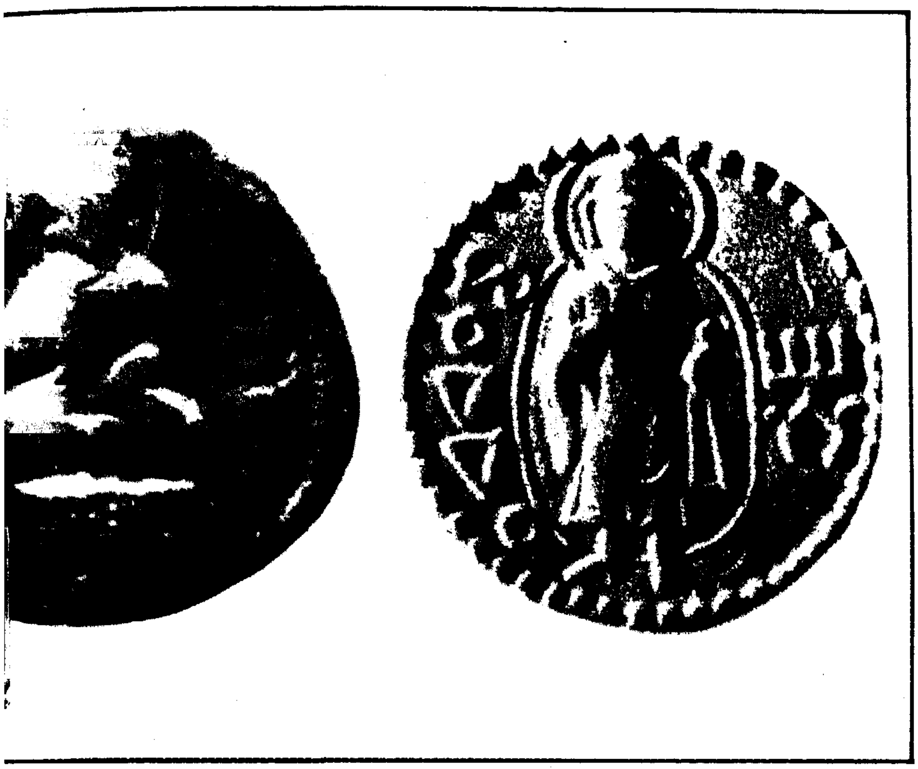
11 Standing Buddha
6th-7th century A.D., Kara Sai
White plaster, h 16.5 cm
Collection & Courtesy, National Museum, New Delhi

12 Seated Buddha
6th-7th Century A.D.; Kizil
Wood; h 18.5 cm
Collection & Courtesy, Museum fur Indische Kunst, W. Berlin

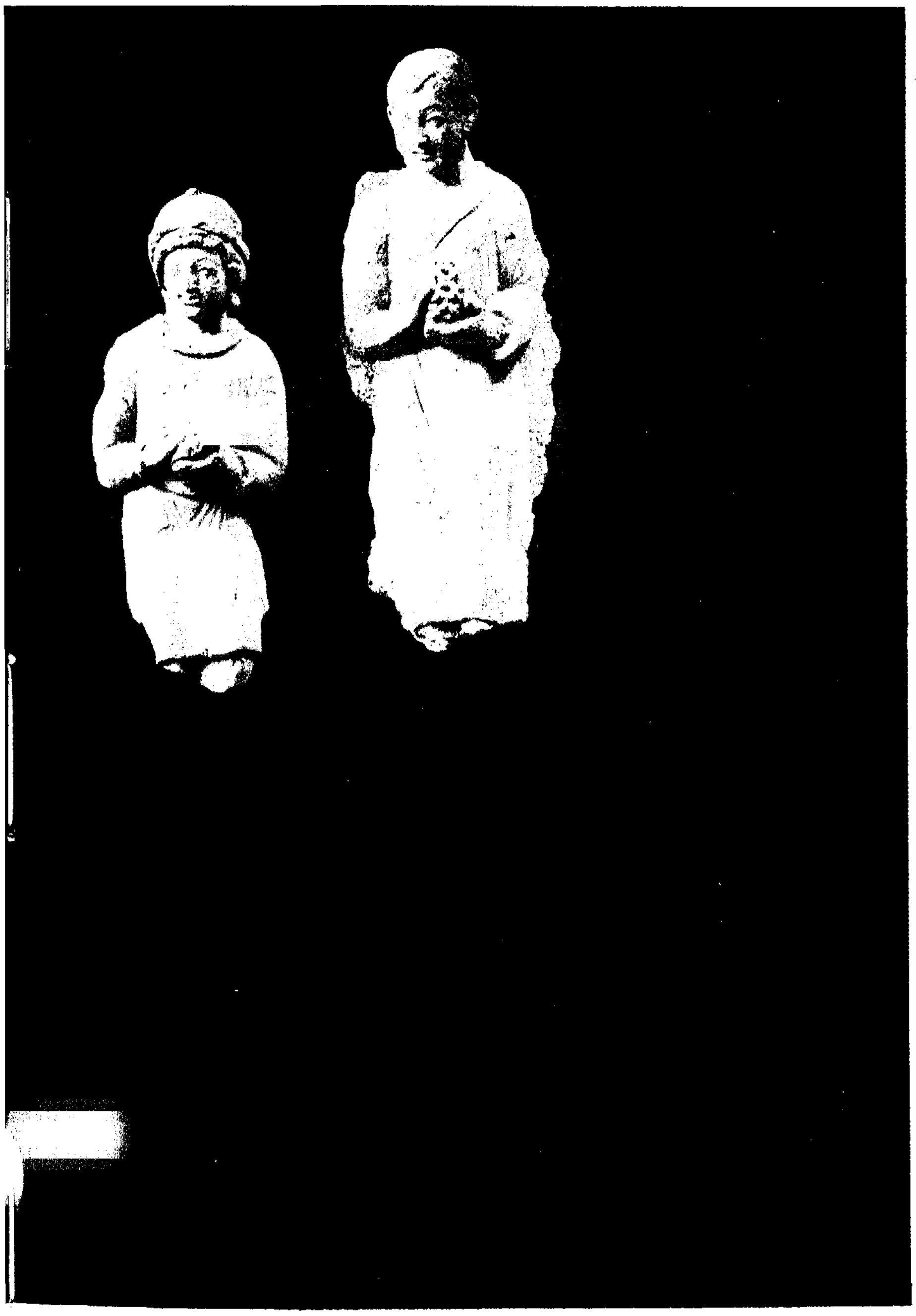


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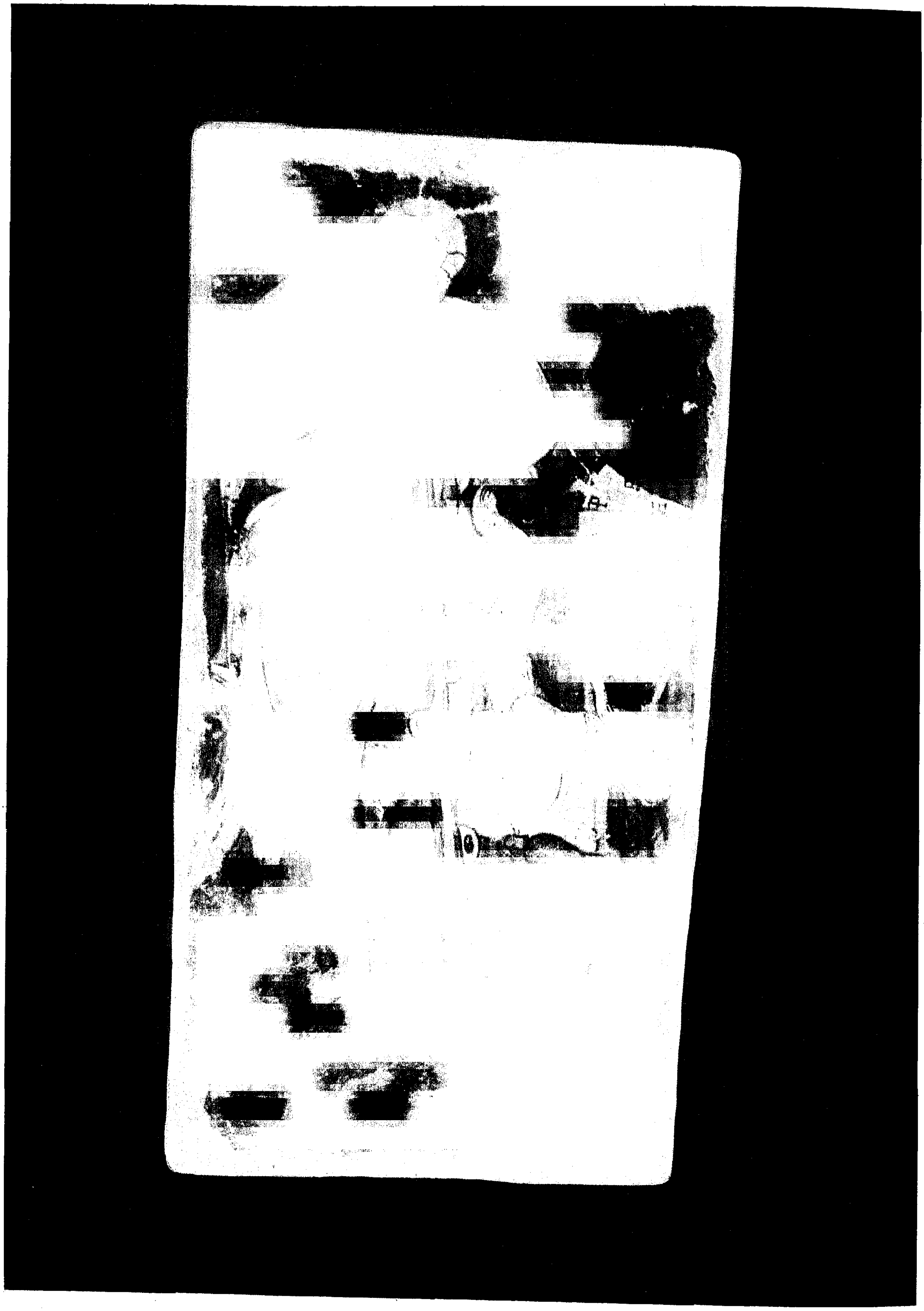



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13 Cowherd Nanda
6th century A.D., Kizil
Wall-painting; 60 x 33 cm
Collection & Courtesy, Museum fur Indische Kunst, W. Berlin

14 Gold reliquary showing Buddha flanked by Brahma and Indra
Bimaran, Afghanistan
Collection: The British Museum
Courtesy, Zwalf W., *The Shrines of Gandhara*

century B.C. to the fourth century A.D. it formed part of the Graeco-Bactrian kingdom. Excavations at this site reveal remains of a Graeco-Bactrian city and a variety of art objects. Prior to these excavations almost nothing was known about Graeco-Bactrian art, apart from its magnificent coinage. These coins bore legends in Greek and, besides giving the names of at least thirty-nine Greek kings who ruled the Kabul Valley and Gandhara for more than two hundred years, they portray Greek rulers on their obverse sides and a mixed iconography of Greek gods and goddesses on their reverse sides. These coins were definitely designed and struck by the artists and artisans from the West as the workmanship is Greek in origin. These coins evince the first cultural fusion among the Hellenists, the Bactrians and the Gandharans.

The archaeological excavations of Khalchayan throw light on the art and architecture of the Graeco-Bactrians. In addition to the citadels and palaces are finds which show Greek influence such as the portraits of warriors and *Fi*
men wearing helmets similar to those found in Afrasiab. Embossed silver plaques and medallions, sometimes gilded, show busts of ladies whose *Fi*
features are Occidental. The style shows a mixture of the Iranian and Greek elements, which paved the way for Kushana art.

Sculptures and small objects of art found near the residence of the early Parthian kings reveal strong Hellenistic trends. A number of ivory rhytons were also discovered in the vicinity. Their shape is Persian but the relief carvings on them show scenes of the Grecian way of life.[4] These reliefs reveal at least twenty Olympic gods which include Zeus and Poseidon, Hera and Demeter, Pallas Athene, Hestia, Artemis, Aphrodite, Apollo and Hermes.[5] Some of the rhytons show Dionysian scenes. Hellenistic influence is encountered in the carving of the figures while other features, such as ornaments, show Persian and Central Asian elements in particular.

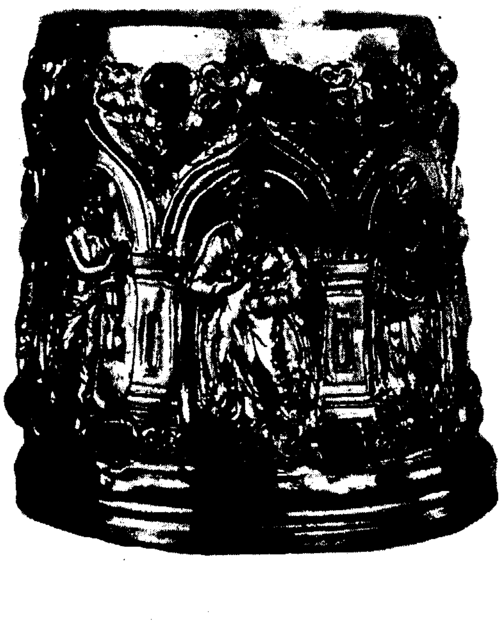
Ornamental friezes depict an undulating garland being supported by children. This motif, as well as the depiction of male and female busts arranged in the curves of the undulated garland, are derived from Hellenistic art of second century B.C.[6] Another favourite motif was the satyr. Pugachenkova observes, "Child garland-bearers, actresses, satyrs, dressed-up maidens, maskaraboz clowns—such is the cast of characters of the Khalchayan friezes. All of them belong to the subject range known as Dionysian—which, as testified by ancient art relics, was extremely widespread on the territory of Central Asia."[7]

The Khalchayan excavations have unearthed a very tangible evidence of the musical culture of the people of Bactria. Quite a few images are shown playing the harp and lute. This suggests that the people of Bactria had a great love for music. A number of similar examples from eastern Turkistan have also been found.

The antiquities unearthed at Khalchayan give a bird's eye view of the period from the Graeco-Bactrian era (third-second century B.C.) to the downfall of the Great Kushanas (third-fourth century A.D.). It outlines the development of Graeco-Bactrian art and all the manner in which it infused artistic impulses of the Kushanas.

Graeco-Bactrian coinage evolved chiefly from the copying of Hellenistic art objects and therefore the rendering became slightly stereotyped and stiff. But when the Graeco-Bactrians worked with living models they produced accomplished and authentic works. The influence of Bactrian art extended outside Bactria and its pervasive presence is evident in artistic trends which had assimilated elements of Graeco-Bactrian nature.

The art of Bactria was Hellenistic in origin. It influenced the art of the Gandharan region. Under the Kushana kings from the first to the third century A.D., Gandharan art exihibits a blend of Hellenistic elements with Indian elements. The derivation of Gandharan art from Bactrian art is clearly visible. Standard motifs continue to be used in modified forms. Statues of the kings, their relatives and noblemen are found in Mathura, Shotarak, Surkh-Kotal and Kunduz.[8] The art of this period is basically formal, very stiff and dominated by frontality. The faces bear little emotional expression. The sculptures lack realistic trends and their mask-like faces reveal no individual or human element.



14

Importance of Gandhara—a centre of art

The art of Kushana-Bactria around the Peshawar valley, popularly known as Gandhara, is entirely different from that of Mathura even though both flourished contemporaneously under the patronage of the same rulers. This discourse focuses on the Gandhara School: how Hellenistic elements influenced the art of Gandhara, how the Gandhara-Hellenistic elements are fused with Central Asian art and how Hellenistic art elements were further transmitted to the art of Central Asia.

The region of Gandhara, situated in north-western India, underwent considerable political turmoil. Nevertheless, it maintained consistent touch with Bactria. Its strategic position on the cross-roads of the Silk Routes, which are arterialised between the East and the West, was advantageous. From Alexander's invasion (327 B.C.), until the time of Kanishka (A.D. 78-110), Gandhara played a vital role in the history of art on the Indian subcontinent. It was exposed to Achaemenid, Parthian, Greek, Shaka and Kushana art activities but the elements that are conspicuous and predominate the art of Gandhara, are derived from the Hellenistic art. This amalgamation was possible only because of continuous contact between the Gandharans and the Graeco-Bactrian rulers.

15 Detail of Buddha with Vajrapani
2nd century A.D., Gandhara
Schist, h. 39 cm
Collection & Courtesy, Museum fur Indische Kunst, West Berlin

16 Young ascetic
c 500 A.D., Kizil
Wall-painting; h. 35 cm
Collection & Courtesy, Museum fur Indische Kunst, West Berlin

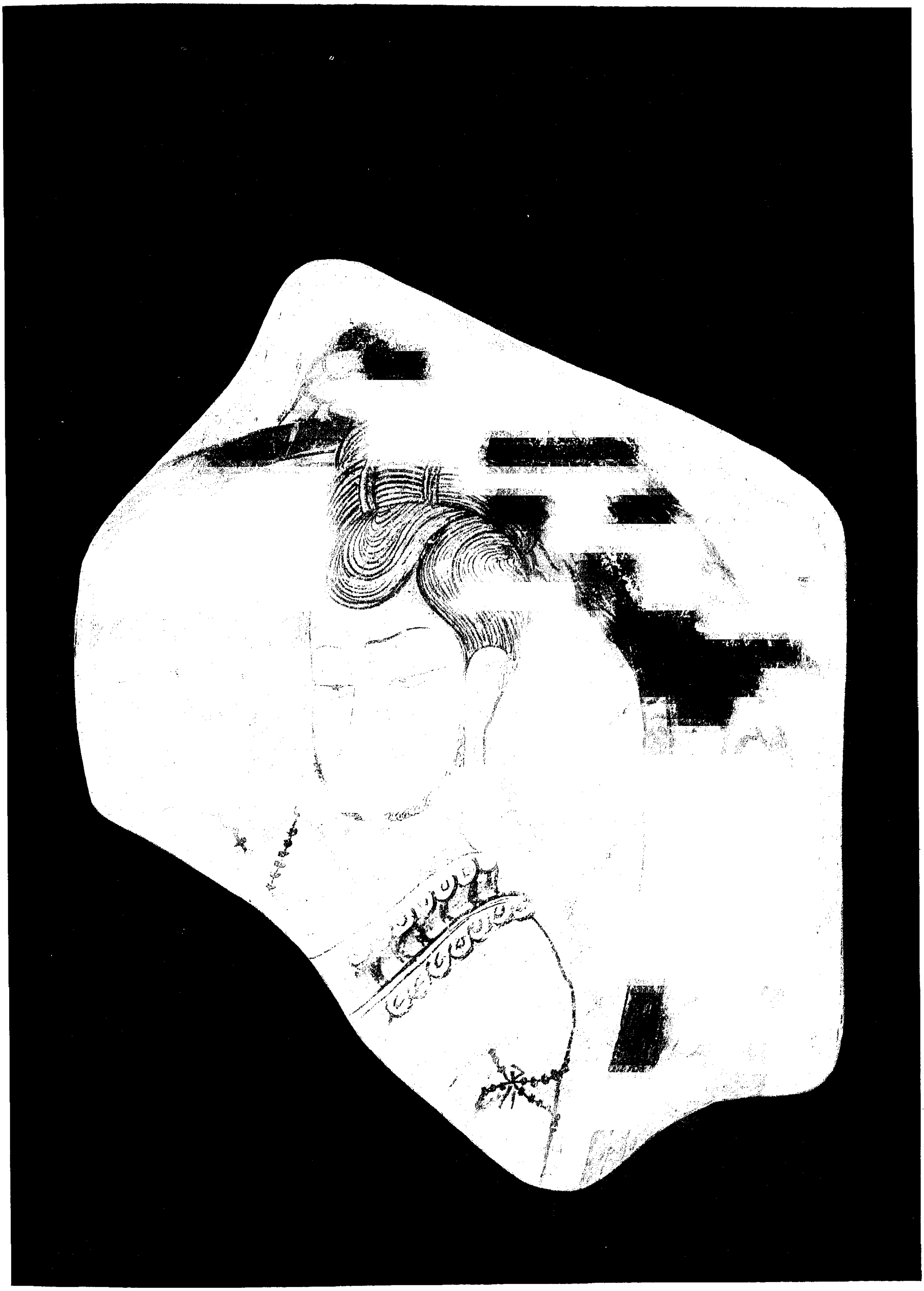
Gandhara Art and its Influence on Central Asian Art

Describing the development of Gandhara art accurately is problematic. From the available archaeological sources, the date of its origin may be assigned to the end of the fourth century B.C.—with the commencement of the Seleucid era in Bactria. The artistic activities during this period are purely Graeco-Iranian in nature. But with the emergence of the Kushanas on the horizon of Gandhara, a new stylistic trend developed which may be titled as the "Graeco-Indian Style."

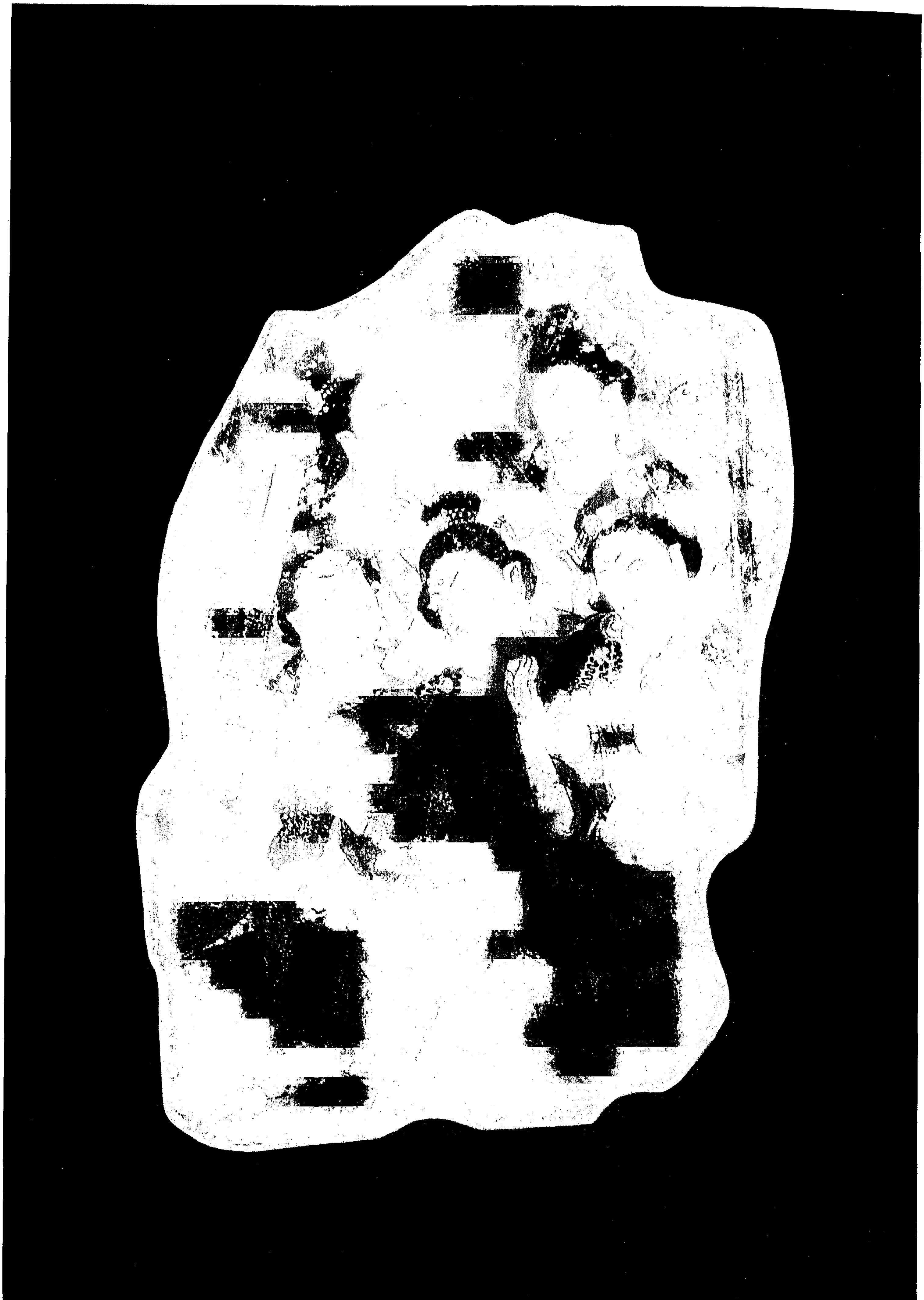
The development of Buddhist art took place during the time of the Great Kushanas. Probably, the earliest Buddha image was depicted on the coins of Kanishka. Each of these coins shows the portrait of Kanishka on the obverse and on the reverse, a figure of the Buddha bearing the legend *'Boddo'* written in Greek. There are two varieties of coins showing the figure of the Buddha: in one type the standing Buddha is shown on the reverse while the other type features a seated Buddha. The Buddha images in two different postures on these coins seem to have served as inspiration for sculpted standing and seated Buddha figures in Gandhara and throughout Central Asia. In these images the Buddha generally wears a *sanghati* (monastic robe) which covers both of his shoulders. It has a typical collar as seen on the Gandhara and Central Asian Buddhas. All the standing Buddhas are usually shown with their right hand placed near the chest or near the right shoulder in *vyakhyanamudra* (gesture of teaching) or *abhayamudra* (gesture of giving assurance). The left hand always grasps a fold of the robe in the case of the standing Buddhas; in that of the seated Buddhas, it rests on the left knee. Besides *abhayamudra,* the seated Buddhas show various other hand gestures such as the *vyakhyanamudra* and *dhyanamudra* (gesture of meditation). These forms almost became conventional for artists all over the Buddhist world from the second century onward. One of the earliest examples, a Kushana coin, combines a circular aureole and an ovoid mandorla against the head and body of the Buddha respectively. This feature has been followed faithfully by the artists of Central Asia. (*Figs. 7, 8*)

Facial features and other details of the Buddha figure are not clear from the coins, but his robe shows a Western Classical touch. Innumerable coins of the Kushana dynasty show various gods and goddesses that can be easily recognised as having originated from the Western Classical tradition. The folds of the *sanghati* and the distinctive way of showing the *ushnisha* of the Buddha—snail-shell curls, achieved by alternate nail-shaped incisions—are Hellenistic in nature. These elements were further assimilated in the art of Central Asia. The figures of the Buddha and other figures carved on stone from Shah-ji-ki-Dheri, near Peshawar and a metal reliquary from Bimaran in Afghanistan, dated A.D. 128 and third century A.D. respectively reveal Hellenistic elements. This trend continues even during the (*Fig. 6*; *Fig. 14*)





16



17

17 Men with swords
5th-6th century A.D.; Kizil
Wall-painting; 56 x 43.2 cm
Collection & Courtesy, Museum fur Indische Kunst, W. Berlin

18 Garland bearer from the dado of a circular shrine at Miran
Collection & Courtesy, National Museum, New Delhi

19 Laughing woman
Sorchuk
Collection & Courtesy, National Museum, New Delhi

20 Weeping man
Sorchuk
Collection & Courtesy, National Museum, New Delhi

sixth and seventh centuries A.D. in Afghanistan. The Bodhisattva Maitreya and Bodhisattva figure from Fondukistan are excellent examples showing a blend of Graeco-Indian trends. Interestingly, the same tradition of Graeco-Indian elements is found in Kizil.

The undulated ornamental garlands being carried by children and the male busts have their roots in Hellenistic art of the second century B.C. These motifs are encountered in Gandhara and appear to have been transmitted to Central Asia[9] during the third-fourth centuries A.D. Miran, one of the oasis cities situated to the south-east of the southern Silk Route, shows an excellent example of the continuation of the Hellenistic motif. A large semi-circular fragment belonging to the dado of the northern wall of Temple V at Miran depicts a continuous undulated garland carried by the *puttis*. These youthful *puttis* seem to have been modelled after the Eros of Greek mythology. The descending loops of the undulating garland reveal figures, some of which play musical instruments, while others carry *patera;* a few however, are portrayed doing nothing. *Fig.*

The figures painted on the walls of the stupa of Miran and the figure with caduceus woven in the woollen tapestry from Loulan[10] seem to be executed by Western artists and artisans. The facial features with large wide open eyes, fair complexion tinged with pink, and the chiaroscuro used for producing the three-dimensional effects are purely Greek in


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character. The figures also recall the portrait-medallions that decorate the tomb chambers of Palmyra, in Syria (259 A.D.) and the encaustic portrait-panels from the Fayyum tombs in Egypt, datable to the early Christian Era.

An inscription in three lines on the leg of an elephant painted on the southern wall of the circumambulatory passage of Temple V at Miran is written in Kharoshthi script—a script used by the Kushanas. It bears the name of an artist called Tita (probably derived from Titus) who apparently received 3000 *bhammakas*[11] for his work. This is an important piece of information because it mentioned the remuneration of the painter as well as the name of the painter. The name Tita was a popular personal name throughout the Graeco-Roman provinces in the Near East[12] (late fourth century B.C. to second century A.D.). The inscription as well as the style of these wall-paintings at Miran clearly indicate that they were definitely executed by artists of foreign origin. Perhaps these artists painted under the patronage of the kings ruling in the area during the third-fourth centuries A.D.

The other reliquary, made of gold and studded with rubies, was found at a stupa at Bimaran in Afghanistan. The casket is decorated with a schematic design showing architectural, figural and floral motifs executed in the *repousee* technique. A number of ogee arches rest on typical Greek pillars. Each of these arches includes the figure of a standing Buddha flanked by Indra and Brahma. The Buddha figure executed on this reliquary reveals a close similarity to that struck on the coin of Kanishka. Similar architectural pillars as well as Indo-Ionic pillars are commonly found in the art of Central Asia.[13]

Several examples of art portray the people of Bactria and Gandhara enjoying music, and playing various instruments. A number of corresponding examples occur in Chinese Turkistan, unveiling the musical culture of Central Asia. Apart from the figure of the lady playing the harp,[14] a number of miniature monkey figures—made of terracotta from Yotkan of the fourth-fifth centuries A.D.—are found playing various musical instruments: lute,[15] syrinx, flute, cymbals, drums and so on. This indicates that the Central Asians were as proud of their musical culture as the Bactrians and Gandharans. The citizens of Kizil, one of the most prosperous and highly cultured cities on the northern Silk Route and Khotan, the other famous city on the southern Silk Route, were famous for their love for music.

Like the Bactrians and the Gandharans, the Central Asians excelled at modelling figures showing various human emotions. The sculptures of Sorchuk, situated on the northern Silk Route, show stucco heads reminiscent of the satyr figures from Khalchayan[16] and Gandhara. The expressions, especially of the laughing old woman or the weeping man, are very realistic. These two eloquently modelled sculptures are comparable to the satyr-figures seen in Greek art and in Khalchayan.

Figs. 19, 20

Bas-reliefs from Gandhara exhibit compositions wherein the figures are aligned in superimposed registers. The sculptor used the frontal and three-quarter profile of the images in order to convey a sense of space and perspective. For this purpose, the sculptor divided the surface into an imaginary network of geometric pattern in the shape of lozenges. The same compositional formula was followed by the artists of Central Asia. In one fragment, six male figures are portrayed; they stand in three rows and form imaginary lozenges. Some of the figures are in profile while others face the spectators. Through this technique, the artist tried to project space and movement much in the way as Gandhara sculptors.

Chinese Central Asia came under the spell of Hellenistic and Gandhara influences from c. the third century A.D. to c. the seventh-eighth centuries A.D. The Central Asians enjoyed a most vibrant culture from about the second century B.C. to the tenth century A.D., but "the ravages of the Mongols and the mortifying hand of Islam that has caused so many cultures to wither forever, aided by the process of nature, completely stopped the life of what must, for a period of centuries, have been one of the regions of the earth most gifted"[17] in assimilating elements and religions of the East and the West.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

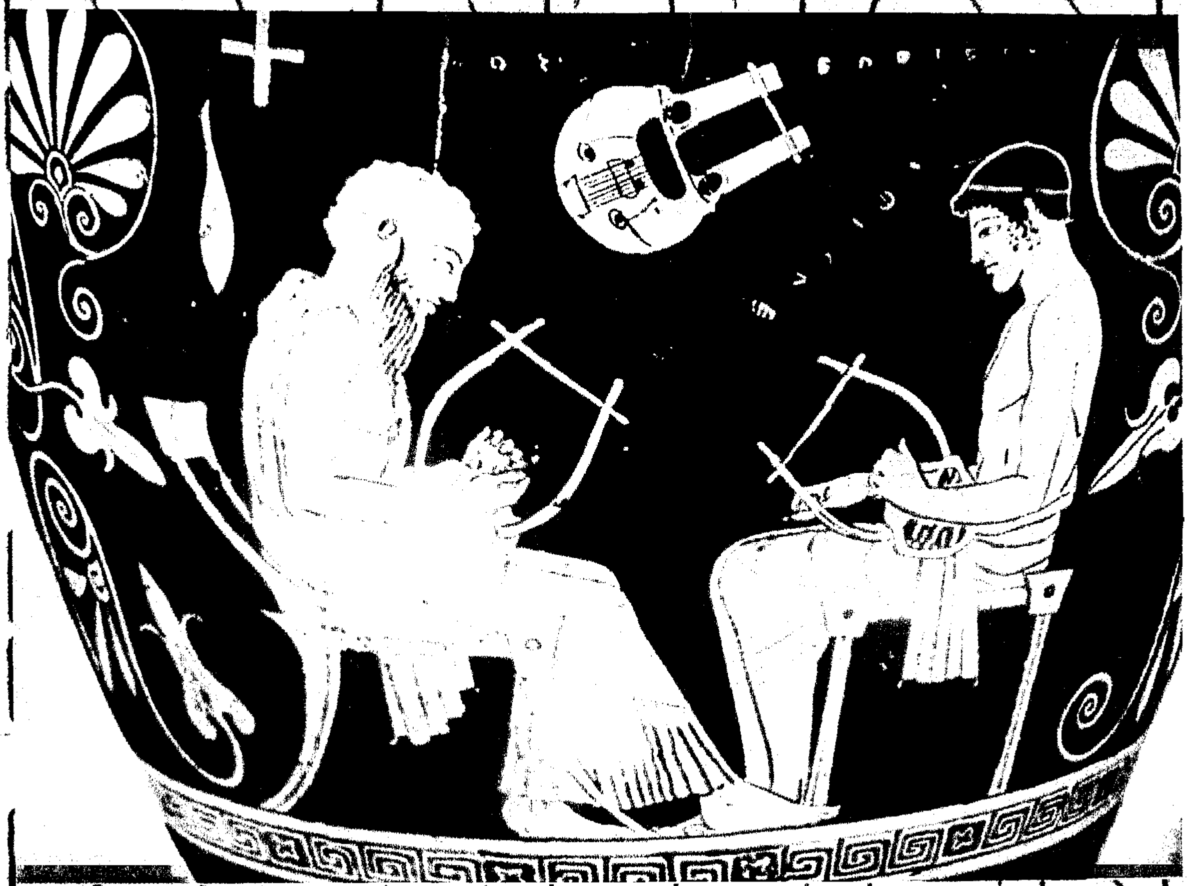
1 The New Encyclopaedia of Britannica; Macropaedia, U.S.A. 1975; Vol. 8; p. 371
2 *Ibid.*; p. 389
3 Rowland, Benjamin; *The Art and Architecture of India;* Penguin Books, 1967; p. 74
4 Albaum L. I. and Brentjes B.; *Waechter des Goldes: Zur Geschichte und Kultur mittelasiatischer Voelker vor dem Islam;* Berlin 1972; pp. 101-103; Pls. 59-61
5 *Ibid.*; p. 83
6 Pugachenkova, G. A.; *Skultura Khalchayana;* Moscow 1971; p. 128
7 *Ibid.*; p. 129
8 *Ibid.*; p. 132
9 According to Benjamin Rowland, "Gandhara sculptures have little to do with Greek art either in its Hellenic or Hellenistic phase, and are much more closely related to Roman art", *op. cit.;* p. 76. Sherman E. Lee is also of the opinion that Gandhara art was mainly influenced by the Roman art elements: *A History of Far Eastern Art;* p. 99. Historically, and according to archaeological evidence, this statement is not acceptable. The people of Gandhara had more contact with the Greeks than the Romans. The art of Gandhara was more influenced by the Graeco-Bactrian than Roman elements. The discovery of Surkh Kotal shrines in 1951 and the excavations at Ai Khanoum in 1964 in Bactria prove that the art of Gandhara is closely related to Hellenistic art. Excavations at Ai Khanoum, situated on the bank of the Oxus on the Afghan side, reveal it to be a Greek city. Greek sculptures and inscriptions found at Ai Khanoum underline the fact that the art of Gandhara and its adjacent cities are purely Graeco-Bactrian and not Roman.
10 Stein, Marc Aurel; *Innermost Asia;* 1929; pp. 231, 246, 253; Pl. XXX
11 *Ibid.*; *Serindia;* Oxford 1921; p. 530
12 *Ibid.*; pp. 530, 531
13 Cf. *Ibid.*; Vol. III; pp. 1216, 1217 and Vol. IV; Pl. CXXVIII, Mi. xiv. 003
14 Cf. *Ibid.*; Vol. IV, Pl. III, Yo. 0066 in the Stein Collection of the British Museum
15 Teracotta figure from Yotkan, in the Pre-Stein Collection of the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford
16 Pugachenkova, G. A.; *op cit.;* figs. 43, 44
17 Rowland, Benjamin; "Art along the Silk Roads: A Reappraisal of Central Asian Arts;" *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies;* 1964-65; Vol. 25; p. 248

TRADITIONS

HARMONIC AFFINITIES

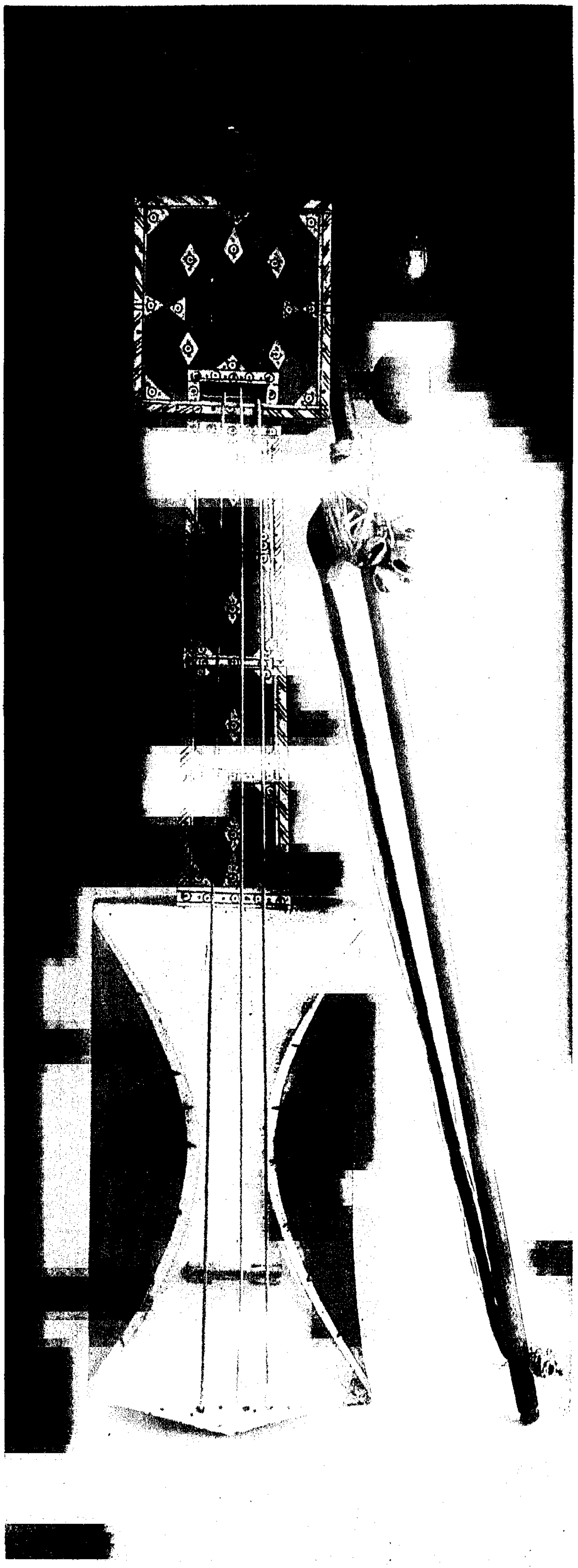
G. Amaryiannakis

The ancient Greek word for "music" refers to human culture in its entirety; that is, the total of its intellectual achievements in literature and the arts.



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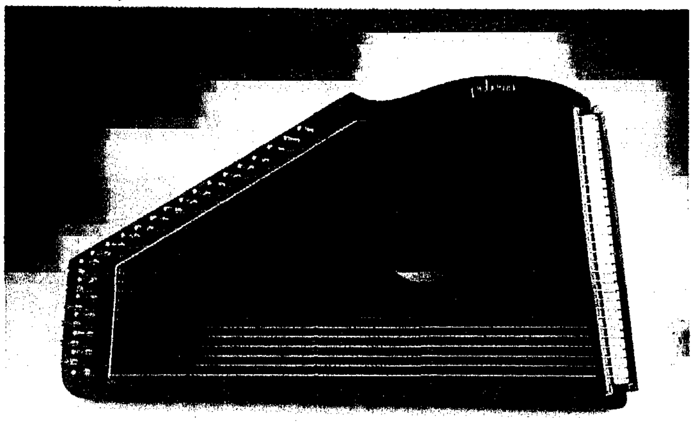
1 Linos and Iphiclis at a *lyra* lesson
Collection, Schwerin Museum Courtesy,
"History of the Greek Nation" of
Ekdotiki Athinon, V. G 2, Athens 1972



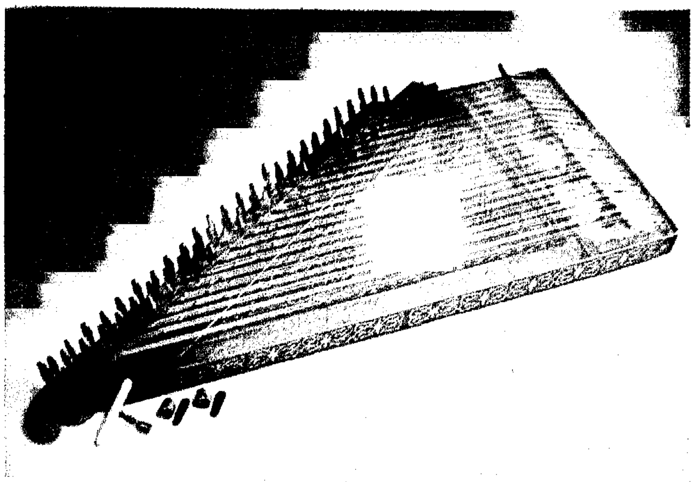
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2 **Jogia Sarangi used in Rajasthan mostly by street singers as an accompanying instrument**
Courtesy, Shashank Lalchand

3 ***Lyra* from Kriti, a modern folk musical instrument**
Courtesy, Fivos Anoyiannakis, "Greek Folk Musical Instruments," issued by the National Bank of Greece, Athens 1976

4 ***Swarmandal,* mostly used all over India by classical vocalists as an accompanying instrument**
Courtesy, Shashank Lalchand

5 ***Kanonáki,* a modern folk musical instrument**
Courtesy, Fivos Anoyiannakis, "Greek Folk Musical Instruments," issued by the National Bank of Greece, Athens 1976

6 **Earthern or clay *toubelekia,* a modern folk musical instrument**
Courtesy, Fivos Anoyiannakis, "Greek Folk Musical Instruments," issued by the National Bank of Greece, Athens 1976

7 ***Udko,* a south Indian percussion instrument**
Courtesy, Shashank Lalchand

8 **Bracket with two musicians**
2nd century A.D., Gandhara
Stone, 37.5 x 13 cm
Collection & Courtesy, The Cleveland Museum of Art, Andrew R. and Martha Holden Jennings Fund



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Therefore, music comprised a complete education in the arts. Plato in his *Politia* writes characteristically: "Just as gymnastics concerns the human body so music concerns the soul." For this reason every cultured individual, poet or philosopher was also a musician. The term "music" with its present connotation only appears after Plato, which provides us with an indication of when music came to be considered an autonomous art. No examples of ancient Greek music survive today. Also, the few melodic fragments



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preserved from the late Classical age fail to clearly define the practical aspects of ancient Greek music. However, indirect evidence such as references in ancient texts, drawings on antique pots and embossments, as well as theoretical musical texts, provide a fair picture of its theoretical system.

On the basis of this evidence it appears that music was raised to the status of a liberal art which aspired neither towards the adulation of the gods nor towards the glorification of the royal courts. It was an art of the people and primarily functional in character; it was devoted to the expression of human concerns in their everyday social and spiritual aspects.

There was a remarkable variety of musical instruments—percussion, wind and stringed. In vocal music, the rhythm of verses ruled the rhythm of the melody. The rhythms of ancient Greek music—many of which are still discernible in contemporary Greek folk music—derived from prosodical speech and, in particular, from poetry.

An important aspect of ancient Greek music consisted of the "laws." These were short, easy to learn and sung in many voices simultaneously. Any divergence from their fundamental principles was prohibited. Later, when the concept of music became independent from that of language, these rules evolved into compositions of a complex and exacting nature. Related to the concept of musical law is the theory of ethos in music. Ancient Greeks believed that music was an agent of ethos, that each musical composition served a specific ethos, and therefore that music possessed an outstanding educational and moralistic character. Plato in the *Timaeus* mentions that harmony was granted by the Muses to people as an ally to the soul to restore its disordered orbit. In *Politia* he refers to the importance of music as a law and mentions the danger of introducing new kinds of music to the public because musical modes never changed without corresponding changes in political laws. Because of this high conception of ethos, ancient Greek music is deemed superior to contemporary music which is not disciplined by the application of technical rules and techniques. From ancient Greek music originated two other branches which developed together and exist to this day. These are the Byzantine ecclesiastical music and the Greek folk music. The term "Byzantine ecclesiastical music" refers to the kind of music used by the East Orthodox Church to serve its members. It is monophonic, modal and vocal. It is chanted in one voice by choirs and its purpose is neither cultural nor aesthetic, but religious. While there is extensive information on the evolution of hymnology—the types of the hymns, the ritual of the divine services and the melodists during the first millennium A.D., there is none on musical writing. The question whether any method of musical writing existed in those days remains unanswered. However, the 15th Rule of the Synod of Laodikia in the middle of the fourth century mentions that "no one is permitted to chant in the churches except the ordinary vocalists standing on the pulpit and singing with the aid of parchments." The reference to these parchments (books of finished leather sheets) indicates that there was, in fact, a system of musical script.

The sturgeon papyrus No. 1786 of the third century discovered in Egypt and published by Arthur Hunt, contains a hymn to the Holy Trinity toned by the ancient Greek alphabetical cipher writing. This fact, in combination with the hymn of Ambrose *Te Deum Laudamus,* also toned by means of the same alphabetical method, supports the surmise that, during the early Christian Era, ancient Greek musical writing was in use, from which developed Byzantine cipher writing. Unfortunately, no musical instrument belonging to the period prior to the tenth century survives. Probably they were destroyed during the troubled years of the iconoclasm. But their existence is suggested by the fact that the century manifested a highly developed system of musical writing.

The tenth century represents the beginning of Byzantine cipher writing. The script was mainly stenographic: the musical symbols or combination of symbols (notes) were used as memos to assist the choir to repeat the accurate melody of the hymns. Later, there was a continuous and persistent attempt towards the converting of the stenographical system to the analytical, thus permitting the writing of the melodies in detail.

Greek Folk and Byzantine Music

Greek folk music has been developed and carefully preserved by the Greek people, and plays a prominent role in their everyday social and spiritual life. This music is unwritten and entirely dependent upon the auditory tradition. It has a congregative character and requires no special musical training. Also, it is monophonic (with the exception of the peculiar polyphonic songs of north Ipiros) and modal—based on physical scales: diatonic and chromatic. Greek folk music, like folk poetry and dance, is an effective means of expression of the peoples' psyche and their regional culture. It includes songs on historical themes, love songs, marital songs, religious songs, nursery rhymes and laments. These songs are sung either in free or periodical rhythms and many of them are of ancient origin. Since Greek folk music is unwritten and based on the auditory tradition, it allows improvisations within certain limits. Improvisation may be free or limited. The free one (when the artist performs a melody inspired at that time) has a special meaning because it provides the basis for new melodies. In the limited improvisation the artist modifies the rendition and rhythm of a well-known motif without straying from its basic melody.

In Byzantine music there is a category of hymns called *prosomia,* they do not have their own melody but are chanted according to that of other hymns called *automela troparia* (autonomous melodies) and have the same number of syllables and the same beat. Each of the known eight modes of Byzantine music has its own *automela troparia;* any alteration or adaptation of the melody of these hymns is prohibited. For this reason, the chanters learn them by heart, always uniformly and without any divergence. The same phenomenon is noticed in Greek folk music as well. In west Crete, for example, there are about 40 melodies, which serve as the basis for hundreds of others. This phenomenon, has a direct relation to the ancient Greek musical laws, as far as their original form is concerned, which consisted of short and easily memorised melodies sung by people together without any alteration.

The evolution of the ancient Greek laws led to "modes" in Byzantine music. The mode indicates the idea and the course of the melody and shows the musician how he should proceed. Therefore the mode serves as the intangible model to which the musical performance must conform.

Indian Music

The beginnings of Indian music are unknown, but the Indians attribute it to divine origin. According to Indian myths, Brahma taught the art of music to Shiva and subsequently Sarasvati, the goddess of literature and the arts, learnt it from Shiva. In ancient depictions, this goddess is shown holding the musical instrument *veena* and a book in her hands. Thereafter, music became known to the sage, Bharata, who in turn, taught this art to the people. The first known musical dissertation, entitled *Natya Shastra* (fifth century) belongs to Bharata. Apart from mythic narrative, the first references about Indian music occur in the holy *Vedas,* especially the *Samaveda.*

Apparently, there were many attempts to systematise Indian music after the invasion of the Muslims in the eleventh century when, Indian music was influenced by the introduction of new musical instruments and melodies. In the early fourteenth century, the popular *sitar* and *tabla* appear to have been invented. Almost all Indian kings—Muslim and Hindu—patronised this art form. Even today it plays an important role in the life and philosophy of all stratas of society. Especially impressive is the metaphysical importance given by the Indians to sound. For, they believe that sound is related with the creation of the universe and is inherent in humanity as a divine gift.

Indian music presents an impressive variety. This may stem from the diversity of races, old or new, which have lived in the country; its religious beliefs; and its physical formation and climatic conditions. Indian music exists at two levels, the classical and the folk. The former, inspite of the fact that it is monophonic, modal, unwritten and based on improvisation, is absolutely artistic. One of the special characteristics of classical music is

"legato". This, as in Byzantine music serves as the basis for the support of the melody. However, there is one important difference; while Byzantine legato is vocal and it may change from the tonic to other notes of the scale according to the melody, Indian music is instrumental and does not make such transitions. This is because the *tamboura* does not allow any movement of the fingers and therefore gives only those notes permitted by its physical tuning.

In Indian classical music there is an impressive variety of rhythms originated from Sanskritic prosodic poetry. In this aspect it resembles ancient Greek rhythms. All kinds of homogeneous and heterogeneous rhythms with a fantastic arrangement of the beats are encountered. Some of them incorporate a great number of beats (14, 15, 16, 24, *etc.*). Perhaps such rhythms once existed also in Greek folk music, but because the Greeks are influenced by the Western mode they separate the melody into shorter units. Hence, complicated rhythms do not occur in Greek music. However, the fact that the melodic units of Greek folk songs in a great number consist of four metres regardless of the beat (3, 4, 5, 6, *etc.*) provides some indication that such rhythms may be also inherent in Greek music.

A remarkable form of Indian music is the *raga*—a melodic model governed by strict traditional rules. Every *raga* is based on a scale with a strictly determined arrangement of the spaces in both its ascending and descending order. It has its own original and final note, its own endings and its own characteristic melodic lines. Certainly the *raga* is something like the musical "laws" of the ancient Greeks, or the "modes" of Byzantine music.

Every *raga* has a determined position in time—it is performed during a particular season at a specified period of the day or night. This indicates that the system is built on a theoretical foundation. Interestingly, the *raga* played at sunrise, employs a scale that matches the known chromatic scale of the Oblique Second Mode of Byzantine music. At the time of sunset, a *raga* with the same scale is performed but with a half-note in its fourth note. This use of the chromatic scale in periods coinciding with sunrise and sunset raises an interesting question: do the ecclesiastical hymns, the *exapostilaria,* chanted according to the chromatic scale of the second mode at sunrise—according to the rites of the Orthodox Church—as well as the "lamp-shading" hymn, *Phos Ilaron,* chanted on the basis of the same mode during the divine service of vespers at sunset preserve, perhaps an ancient practice of using the chromatic scale at that time? Although no answer is possible, this aspect opens up an area for research. The perception for the position of each *raga* in time has, undoubtedly, a close relationship with its ethos. It provides a parallel conception to that of the ancient Greeks for the ethos of harmonies or that of the modern age for the ethos of ecclesiastical modes.

Lastly, a significant characteristic of Indian music is its improvisation. Since Indian music is unwritten, the artists or singers are expected to improvise. For this reason, the musical performances are unique happenings and it is impossible to reproduce them precisely. Even if the same artiste performs every time, the same *raga,* his rendition will vary slightly just as that of a vocalist who does not strictly adhere to staff notation. However, the improvisation is not performed arbitrarily; it is limited by strict rules which govern the *ragas* and is set within a prescribed framework. Any improvisation that transgresses these limits is considered unacceptable. Therefore, the ability and skill with which the artist improvises becomes the main criteria for evaluating a performance. It is important to realise that the limitations of the *raga* structure do not act as restraints on the creative fantasy of the artist. On the contrary, they give to him the desirable freedom since they protect him from arbitrariness and allow him to direct his creative fantasy in safe channels.

The affinity between the Byzantine *tererem* and the Indian *tarana,* the Byzantine *apihima* (resound) and the Indian *alap,* the Byzantine micro-spaces and the Indian *shrutis,* are most intriguing. Often Indian and Greek music reveal close parallels—so much so that occasionally it is difficult to distinguish between an Indian and a Greek melody. This phenomenon leads to exciting and unexplored possibilities of research which must be systematically investigated by the two cultures.

TRADITIONS

PARAGONS OF PERFORMANCE

M. L. Varadpande

In the year 326 B.C. Agen, a satirical play with a political message, was staged before the jovial congregation of Yavana soldiers indulging in the feast of Dionysius.



1

It was being celebrated in the military camp of Alexander the Great on the bank of the river Hydaspes—Jhelum—in upper Punjab.

Probably this is the first Greek play ever staged on the soil of India, though this might have been disputed by the ancient Greeks. According to the Greeks, more than six thousand years before Alexander's entry into India, the theatre god, Dionysius, along with his lascivious satyrs made his triumphal march through the land established his rituals among the local people. It is believed that he taught theatrical arts to the Indians. Megasthenes, Seleuces Nicator's political envoy to the court of Sandracottos and author of *Indika,* writes:

> "Father Bacchus was the first who invaded India, and was the first of all who triumphed over the vanquished Indians. From him to Alexander the Great 6451 years are reckoned with 3 months additional, the calculation being made by counting the kings who reigned in the intermediate period of the number of 153."[1]

Interestingly enough, the Greek god of theatre did not use conventional arms or strategies to conquer the foreign land. His were methods novel, suited to his theatrical character. Says Megasthenes:

> "Dionysos, in his expedition against the Indians, in order that the cities might receive him willingly, disguised the arms with which he had equipped his troops, and made them wear soft raiment and fawn-skins. The spears were wrapped round with ivy, and the thyrsus had a sharp point. He gave a signal for battle by cymbals and drums instead of the trumpet, and by regaling the enemy with wine, diverted their thoughts from war to dancing. These and all other Bacchic orgies were employed in the system of warfare by which he subjugated Indians and all the rest of Asia."[2]

The god of theatre won the Indians with the wine, music and dance. An echo of this myth is found in accounts of many ancient Greek writers on India. For instance, Flavius Arrianus records it in *Indika.* He says:

> "Indians have been particularly distinguished among the nations as lovers of dance and song ever since Dionysos and his attendant Bacchanals made their festive progress through the realms of India. The Indians worship the other gods, and Dionysos himself in particular, with cymbals and because he so taught them; and he also taught them the Satyric dance, or, as the Greeks call it, the Kordax."[3]

The Kordax is the drunken dance of Satyrs with grotesque movements quite popular on the Greek stage.

Popular Greek playright, Euripides (*c.* 480-406 B.C.), also contributes to this assumption. In his play, Bacchae, the theatre god proclaims that he has visited Asian cities where Greek and foreign nationals live, mingling with one another and taught their feet dancing.[4] However, he did not specifically mention India.

The myth regarding the theatre god's conquest of India is a sequel to Alexander's military campaign. Various accounts of his daring expedition include Dionysian festivities like the one at Nysa for ten riotious days.[5] These festivities were organised to keep the bored army in good cheer. During the celebration held in Alexander's military camp on the river Jhelum, the play *Agen* was staged.

Only eighteen lines of this play have survived. Professor Bruno Snell in his book *Scenes from Greek Drama*[6] has devoted two full chapters to the discussion, analysis and reconstruction of the play which, according to him, is based on historical fact. Some scholars believe that Alexander himself authored this play but Snell convincingly suggests that it was written by orator Python of Byzantium who was quite close to the king. The play depicts the licentious life of one of the most powerful administrators of the empire, who was also a close friend of Alexander. Harpolas, the central figure of the play, was appointed as an administrator of civil matters in Persia. He recklessly squandered money from the state treasury on personal pursuits. In memory of his dead mistress, Pythionike, he constructed a temple, raising her rank to that of Aphrodite. He soon acquired a new mistress, Glykera, from Athens, gave her the status of a queen and erected a bronze statue in her honour. The setting of the play's opening scene consists

1 Bacchanalian scene
Private Collection, Paris
Courtesy, Francine Tissot

of a harlot's temple to the left and the entrance to the underworld covered with reeds on the right. We know from the introduction that the distressed hero is assured by the magicians a vision of the soul of his departed beloved. The surviving fragment of the play contains a dialogue between two persons giving some information about two harlots and the hero.

Snell, while attempting the reconstruction of the play conjectures various interesting situations—some based on historical papers and some adapted to the general pattern of the satyr drama which he thinks *Agen* is. He feels that the character Agen represents Alexander who might have been appearing at the end of the play to tackle the problems created by his friend. The play was intended to serve as a message to Alexander to return home to tackle the problems created by the administrators in charge of his newly acquired territories. Snell writes:

> "There is scarcely any doubt that *Agen* was performed in the public. In that case the soldiers must have listened to it as well, those same soldiers who shortly before had refused—or were about to refuse—to take any further part in adventures eastwards . . . Many a Macedonian may have felt distressed during the performance of this merry play which vividly portrayed the dissolute life of a man in a responsible position and the orientalization of the state hierarchy. And Alexander, when he saw himself appear at the end to put everything to rights, could not ignore the summons to return home at once and take measures against his closest friends."[7]

The play seems to have been partially responsible for persuading Alexander to abandon his military campaign. While it may have influenced the course of Indian history, how much did it actually influence the Indian theatre scene? Early Buddhist and Vedic literature indicate considerable theatrical activity in India well before the advent of Alexander. Did Indian Shailushas and Natas really learn the Kordax as claimed by the ancient Greek historians? When Kautilya prescribed measures against obscenity on the stage or Bharata decried it,[8] were they referring to foreign influences? History is now inclined to acknowledge the existence of clusters of small Greek communities on the Indian border before Alexander's invasion. Grammarian Panini claims the knowledge of Greek script—Yavanallipyam. According to some historians, Chandragupta—who later became emperor of India—was some time in the camp of Alexander as a "fugitive from the kingdom of Magadha."[9] He might have seen the performance of *Agen* and the possibility of his knowing Greek cannot be denied. Later, he actually married a Greek girl, the daughter of Seleucus Nicator, one of the governors of Alexander. History is silent about whether he arranged some Greek plays to entertain his foreign wife.

By Ashoka's time, the Greeks came to occupy important positions in the social, political and commercial life of the country. The emperor even inscribed his edict in Greek and Aramaic languages,[10] but he was not much in favour of dramatic festivities such as *Samaja*, which he nearly banned.[11]

Whatever may be the case, it is certain that Alexander brought Greek theatre to the doorstep of India because, wherever the Greeks went, they carried their theatre with them. Tarn has made a very significant observation in this respect. He says:

> "The argument that we do not know that Greek plays were acted in India is worthless. There were Greek poleis, and a polis of any pretensions without a theatre is unthinkable; the one at Babylon has been excavated. There is no need to doubt Plutarch's statement that Euripides and Sophocles were acted at Susa, for it is known that Sophocles reached India."[12]

The Sanskrit term *yavanika,* meaning stage curtain, induced some scholars to think of *Yavana* (Ionian) or Greek influence on Indian stage decor. They thought that the stage curtain was borrowed by Indians from the Greeks. However the word *yavanika* is the corrupt form of the word *javanika.* In the sense of stage curtain, Bharata has twice used the word *javanika* and not *yavanika* in the *Natya Shastra.* Moreover, it was pointed out that no stage curtains were used on the Classical Greek stage, to borrow.

It was also proved, logically and conclusively, that Indian theatre did not borrow stock characters, themes, production techniques and conventions or dramatic structure from the Greeks by Sylvain Levi.

A fragment of a vase found near Peshawar, which, though locally manufactured, much resembles the Megarian vases of the third and second centuries B.C. in material and design. A scene from the play of Sophocles is depicted on it. J. B. Marshall who studied the piece writes:

> "The third piece is the most interesting of all. On it are depicted three figures—in the middle is a powerfully built and bearded man, to his right a young girl whom he is clutching by her garment while she strives to release herself from his grasp; to his left is a youth around whose shoulders the man's left arm is thrown and who is supplicating him with hands uplifted to his breast.
>
> "We cannot, I think, be wrong in recognising in it the familiar scene from 'Antigone' where Haemon is supplicating his father Kreon for the life of his affianced bride Antigone. Dramatic incidents of the kind from Greek plays were frequently depicted on Megarian vases. Perhaps it was not an uncommon thing for the plays themselves to be reproduced among the Greeks of Northern India."[13]

This evidence points towards the strong possibility of Greek theatre being active in ancient India. However, when it comes to the assessment of its impact on Indian theatre, we seldom find any information on the subject. There are stray references to *Yavanas* in ancient Indian plays. In Kalidasa's play we find *Yavana* girls appearing on the stage as a part of the king's entourage.[14] In his play, *Malavikagnimitra,* the battle between the royal forces of Prince Agnimitra and the *Yavanas* on the bank of the River Indus is mentioned. Vishakhadatta's *Mudrarakshasa* mentions King Porus as Parvataka and tells us that the army of Chandragupta, which captured Pataliputra, contained *Yavana* soldiers. Though the *Natya Shastra* of Bharata says people such as the Shakas, Pahlavas (Parthians), Vahlikas (Behlikas) and *Yavanas* should be shown fair of complexion (*gaura*) while representing them on the stage,[15] we find no significant *Yavana* character portrayed in classical Sanskrit plays.

However, in the fifth-century one-act-play, *Bana Padatadikam,* by the poet Shyamalik, we find a fairly realistic description of a Greek courtesan settled in the then prosperous city of Ujjain. *Yavana* 'singing girls' or 'flute girls' were in great demand in India and they were imported in the country, as recruitment for the royal harems or as courtesans. *The Periplus of the Erythrean Sea,* written in the first century A.D., speaks of wine, silverware, singing boys and beautiful maidens as items of import in India. Karpurturishtha of Ujjain might have been one of them. In one particular passage, the links between drama and reality are clearly established. This is the only evidence in Indian drama where a Greek personage is described to this degree. The narrator, *Vita,* says:

> "And who is this charming girl? O, she is none other than Yavani Karpurturishtha, beloved of my dear friend and Shardulavarma's son—Varaharadas. She holds in three fingers the wine cup to toast the moon. On her cheeks are reflected shining moon-shaped earrings which she is trying to push back by her other hand. The rays of the beautiful earrings are falling on her smooth shoulders in an arc, looking as if the moon herself has descended there.
>
> "The beautiful Yavani with eyes like that of the *chakora* bird is pushing back her hair by the nails of her slender fingers while looking at her face into the goblet full of wine. Because of the wine she is drinking her fair and delicate cheeks have become pink like a *madhuka* flower. Thinking it to be a rouge she tries in vain to rub it off.
>
> "And O, Yavani and *ganika,* monkey and dancer, Malav and lecher, singer and ass are synonymous, possessing the same qualities. Definitely Lord Brahma is great in pairing off these things! Certainly Yavani and Malav are an appropriate pair, made for each other in every respect. The Malav in the company of Yavani looks like a *khadira* tree embraced by the *atmagupta* creeper of a nimb tree encircled by the *patola* creeper.

2 **Sitabenga Cave: ground plan**
Drawings by T. Block, ASI Report 1903-4
Courtesy, Archaeological Survey of India

3 **Sitabenga Cave: section**
Drawings by T. Block, ASI Report 1903-4
Courtesy, Archaeological Survey of India

"I know her, but no, I will not dare speak to her! Who would like to listen to her language full of unfamiliar consonants which she utters like a shrieking female monkey, trying to explain its meaning by gesticulations? I should better move away from here."[16]

In this case the character never appears on stage; according to the Bhana style of production.

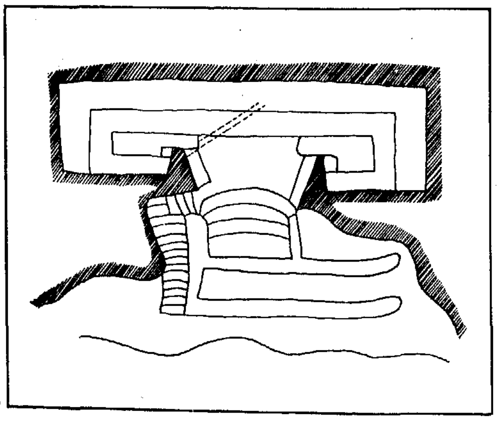
Some scholars have pointed out thematic similarities in Classical Greek and Indian plays but these are too contrived.[17] Claim is also made that some humorous (and insignificant) stock characters were borrowed by Classical Indian theatre from Greek theatre. But we encounter professional jesters right from the Indus civilisation; they are described in the Vedic and early Buddhist literatures, painted in the cave shelters and sculpted on the walls of the temples.[18] It was the belief among the theatrical community of the Buddha's time that an actor who makes people laugh is reborn in the company of the laughing *Devas*.[19] Though the probability of enactment of Greek plays on Indian soil has been confirmed by historical evidence, it did not seem to have a mutual influence on the dramatic level. However, there is a remarkable, almost startling, similarity between Aristotle's and Bharata's theories regarding drama as an imitation of life or actions. But they drift apart as soon as it comes to the elucidating of this point. Both Indian and Greek theatres employ different production techniques and the literary format of their plays does not reveal any mutual influence. However, according to some scholars, a few buildings and structures in India betray the influence of Greek theatre architecture.

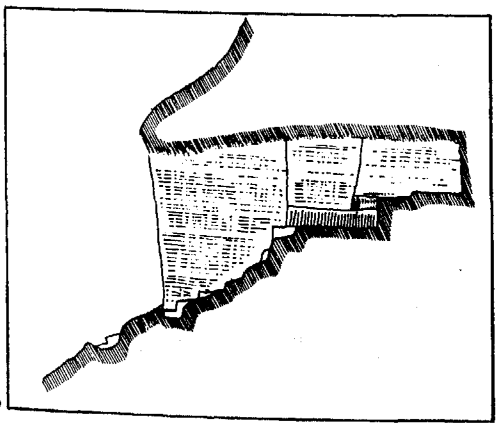
In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, two caves with interesting inscriptions were found on the Ramgarh hills in Sirguja State which now forms part of Madhya Pradesh. The larger one, popularly known as Sitabenga Cave, is described by T. Bloch as "an Indian theatre of the third century B.C." The inscription in the cave reads as follows: "Poets venerable by nature kindle the hearts who . . . At the spring festival of the vernal fullmoon, when frolics and music abound, people thus (?) tie (around their necks garlands) thick with jasmine flowers." The inscription in another cave known as Jogimara reads: " . . . Sutanula by name . . . a *devadasi* . . . Sutanaka by name a *devadasi* . . . The excellent among young men loved her . . . Devadinna by name, skilled in sculpture . . ."

The last word in the fifth line of the inscription is *lupadakhe* which, according to some scholars, refers to an actor rather than a sculptor.

The inscriptions indicate that the caves were used as pleasure resorts and for organising theatrical entertainments. However, it was the structure of the Sitabenga Cave with its benches—seats, tier above tier—that mainly attracted the attention of the archaeologists. They saw the influence of the Greek amphitheatre in it. T. Bloch writes:

"In front of the entrance was a row of rock-cut benches arranged in terraces in the shape of a crescent . . . these would be very suitable as benches to seat an audience watching some play or similar performances acted in front of them . . . the plan of the small amphitheatre in front of the cave with its hemispherical rows of rock-cut seats rising in terraces above each other and with the pathways between them arranged somewhat like concentric circles and radiate, bear a certain resemblance to the plan of a Greek theatre."[20]


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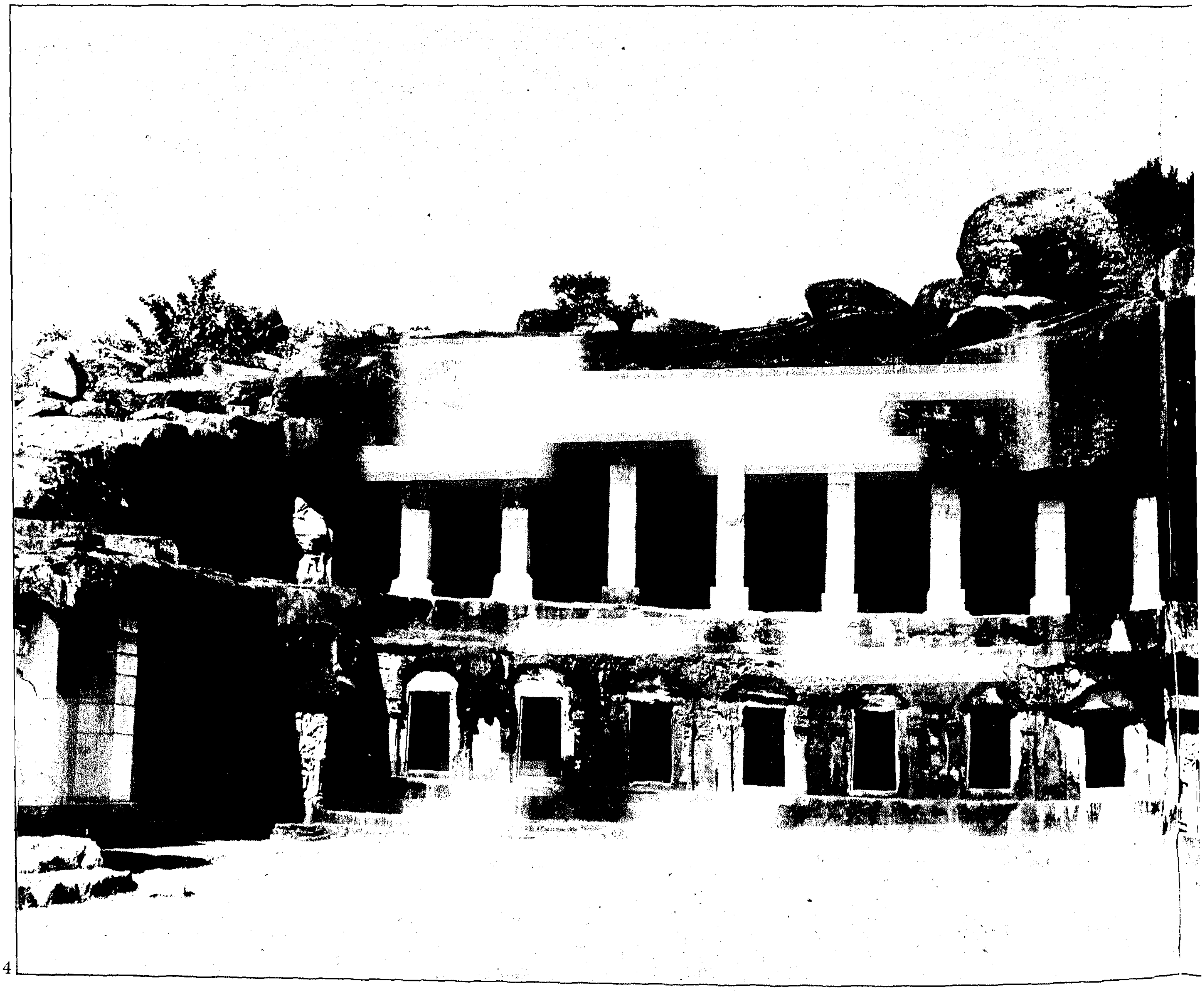
Similarities are certainly interesting but can we go beyond stating that there is a 'certain resemblance'?

Caves and hills were used in India as pleasure resorts since pre-historic times. A rock-cut amphitheatre is found at Bhimbhetka near Bhopal which belongs to the Mesolithic period. Chullavagga mentions *giragga samagga*, theatrical entertainment held on the mountain-top with dancing, singing and music (*naccham pi vaditam pi gitam pi*). Epics mention *Krida Parvata*—even artificial ones—marked for various entertainments. Kalidasa also refers to such caves.[21] The Rani Gumpha amphitheatre in the hills of Bhubaneshvar is a double-storeyed rock-cut cave with a spacious courtyard meant for dramatic performances.[22] Wooden benches were erected around the performing arena in ancient Greece for the spectators. In Buddhist Jataka stories we get the description of such constructions that were raised

to provide a place to witness the skills of actors.[23] In India, like in Greece and Rome, dramatic performances formed a part of religious festivals and were celebrated in temple precincts. In medieval India, temples were provided with *nata mandirs* (dancing halls) for such performances. In the temples of Kerala separate theatre buildings called *kutambalams* were erected on the model of the theatre plan given by Bharata in the *Natya Shastra* which bears no resemblance, even remote, with that of Greek amphitheatres. Some of the *navaranga* halls attached to Karnataka temples, like those in the Channakeshaveshvara temple complex at Belur, have a seating arrangement, tier above tier, around a circular dancing floor.[24] But it shows no parallels with Roman temple-theatres such as at Pompeii where flights of steps were constructed below the temple of Venus for the audience.

However, around 1950, a free-standing structure with brick galleries constructed around a quadrangular arena was excavated at Nagarjunakonda in Andhra Pradesh. It attracted the instant attention of Indologists and archaeologists alike due to its many correspondences, with Greek amphitheatres. A report published in the *Indian Archaeology*: 1954-55 about this unique discovery says:

> "The next site, VII A, was the most important excavation. It revealed the temple of Hariti juxtaposed on the contours of the hill. To reach the temple one had to go up the hill through a quadrangle 54'6" x 45" with arrangements on its four sides for brick galleries edged with cuddapah-stone slabs.... A circular abacus part of column was



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4 Rani Gumpha Theatre
Udayagiri (near Bhubhaneshvar), Orissa
Courtesy, Archaeological Survey of India

5 Nagarjunakonda Amphitheatre
Courtesy, Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi

situated right at the centre of the quadrangle. One of the stone benches bore the triratna and the bow and the arrow mark. Another stone bench had an inscription on it reading 'Kama-shara', the arrow of love. The shrine was approached through this wide enclosure by a flight of steps leading to the top of the hill.... Also, was found in the arena, an inscribed pillar referring to putting up a perpetual endowment on the occasion of some festival or *utsava*."[25]

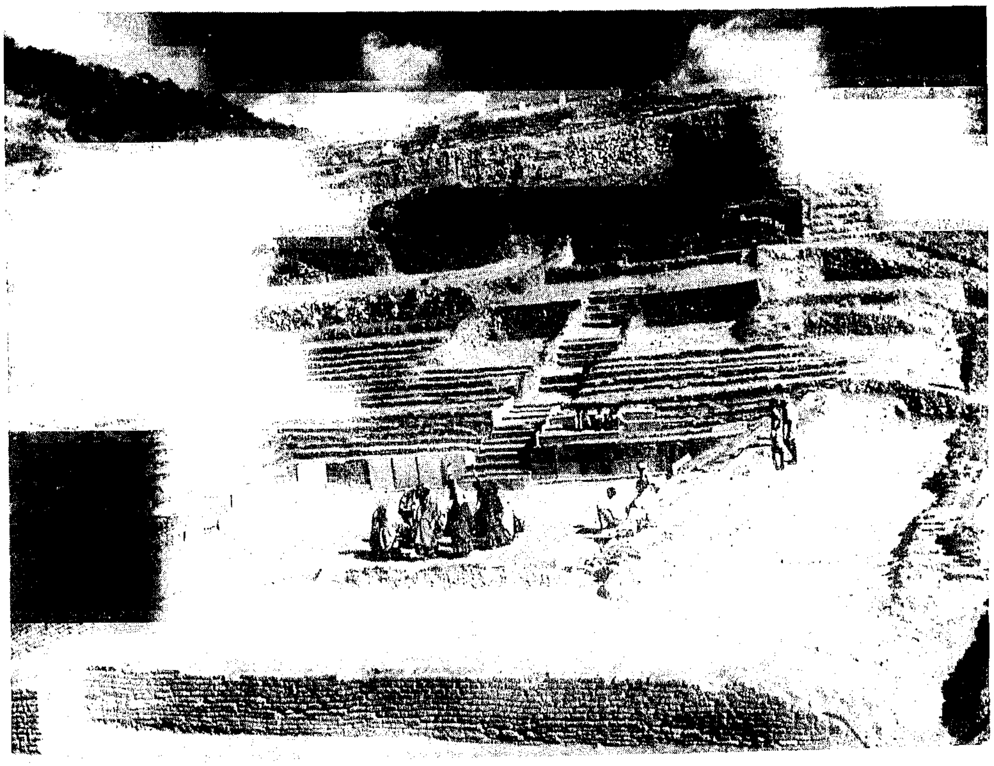
This is really a very important discovery. Trade relations of the Romans with south India are well-known. Roman coins were found at Nagarjunakonda. On a pillar, an engraving of the god Dionysius, in a semi-nude pose with a drinking-horn in his hand was found.[26] Therefore, the possibility of Graeco-Roman settlement at this Buddhist centre cannot be ruled out.

Obviously this amphitheatre was intended for celebrating festivals in the honour of the goddess Hariti, dramatic entertainments forming a part of it. The *triratna* symbol indicates that the structure was Buddhist, built by the guild of architects whose symbol was the bow and arrow. *Kama-shara* might have been the *devadasi* (chief dancer) connected with the temple on the hill-top. The tradition of staging plays on Buddhist themes, pre-Ashokan in origin, still lingers in the Lama establishments of the Himalayan regions. The Nagarjunakonda amphitheatre might have been used for staging plays on Buddhist themes. The central pillar was for fixing lamps to illuminate the performing arena. What strikes us most is the excellent accoustics of the amphitheatre built *c.* third century A.D.

Romans aided by Greek sailors were active in south India, particularly in the coastal areas of the region, during the early centuries of the Christian Era. A farce based on this story, ascribed to the second century B.C. and related to the coastal Karnataka region, was found in the *papyri* excavated at Oxyrhynchus in Egypt by the Biblical Archaeological Association. The most interesting aspect of this discovery is that the farce is written in Greek and Old Kannada. The Oxyrhynchus *papyri* were first translated and published by Bernard P. Grenfell and Arthur S. Hunt in 1903. Dr. R. Sharma Shastri[27] and Professor B. A. Saletore[28] have tried to interpret and translate into English the Kannada passages.

The farce narrates how a Greek girl, fallen prey to an Indian king or chieftain, is rescued by her brother by using wine to make the Indians unconscious. The king in the play is known as Malpe Nayaka. Malpe was a flourishing harbour and an important trade centre of the Tulu land. Egipraphical evidence indicates that important cities had Nayaka administrators. The Roman coins of Augustus Caesar were found in the





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administrators. The Roman coins of Augustus Caesar were found in the region—indicating trade connections with *Yavanas*. *Yavana* girls and wines were sold in Indian markets. Charition, the Greek girl, might have been brought to India and sold to Malpe Nayaka. A passage from *Indika* mentions a novel way by which Dionysius won over the Indians. It says: ". . . . regaling the enemy with wine diverted their thoughts from war to dancing . . . . Bacchic orgies were employed." The Greek party which came to rescue the girl used this method.

There is a lot of controversy regarding the Kannada dialogues. The main argument is that the Kannada language is more recent than the farce which is ascribed to the second century A.D.[29] Now some scholars claim it to be a Tulu language. Some, however, go to the extent of saying that the so-called Indian language in the farce is nothing but nonsense syllables cleverly arranged to create the illusion of an Indian language.

The farce raises interesting questions due to its inclusion of an Indian language, be it Tulu or Kannada. Because of its bi-lingual nature only Kannada and Greek-speaking actors were in a position to perform it. We know that Graeco-Roman mimes visited various countries to stage shows in the early centuries of the Christian Era. The possibility of such mimes visiting south India to entertain the Graeco-Roman settlements, mentioned by the *Shilappadhikaram*, is not unlikely. But in that case, they would not know Kannada or Tulu, or adopt either so soon, during their short stay. Can we not conjure a possibility of Greeks settled in India forming a mime company and travelling up to Egypt where the farce was found?

Taking into consideration the possibility of Greek mimes visiting south India, Katherine B. Free propounded an interesting theory in the American Theatre Journal.[30] She suggests that such mimes might have influenced the Classical Sanskrit theatre in Kerala and those influences might have been preserved by the Kutiyattam theatre which is still performed in India. She says: "In the Kutiyattam of Kerala, we see in a living tradition unbroken from antiquity, many performance conventions which derive from Sanskrit drama and recall ancient Greek performance conventions now lost in the West. Some of them are purely coincidental and others may be a genuine Greek inheritance." Probably Free does not know that the performance conventions of Kutiyattam were established in the tenth century A.D. Her conclusions are therefore too farfetched and imaginary to consider seriously.

The possibility of the enactment of Classical Greek plays in India cannot be denied nor can we altogether reject the possibility of Graeco-Roman mimes visiting south India in the wake of strong trade relations. However, they do not seem to have left any noticeable impact on local theatre traditions, classical or folk. At least we do not have any concrete proof to the effect, in the field of sculpture or in the form of Gandhara art. Because of the non-static or kinetic nature of theatrical art, it is very difficult to discern the foreign influences which might have been dropped, lost or completely assimilated without a trace like the Greek population that settled in India and became assimilated in the mainstream of Indian dramatic representation.

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